

Chapter 141: Leader

Although Lu Yin didn't realize it himself, his Cosmic Art allowed him to sense the danger at the very possible last moment and dodge by sheer instinct. Star energy shot past him, creating numerous ripples in the air behind him.

Xia Luo found it a pity that his attack had missed. Lulu had been defeated by this very same attack, and he had thought that he Lu Yin would be preoccupied by his attack enough to be struck. However, Lu Yin had successfully dodged at the last moment.

Lu Yin took a step backwards and stared hard at Xia Luo. He was shocked to discover that Xia Luo was able to attack him without letting him notice anything. If he hadn't been constantly using his Cosmic Art to defend himself, then he would have lost just now. Lulu's loss now made sense; this guy had a gentle appearance, but he was actually very cunning. His control of star energy was in a class of its own. Lu Yin was certain that Xia Luo's control exceeded his own and probably everyone else present.

What exactly had Xia Luo seen at the Stargazing Deck?

"You're very sneaky," Lu Yin sighed in awe.

Xia Luo raised an eyebrow as he replied, "Don't say that! My attack was still a bit off."

Lu Yin was speechless. That was considered "a bit off?" Most people wouldn't have even seen the attack.

Lu Yin had a feeling that he wouldn't be able to do much to Xia Luo. He knew that it would be difficult to find any success with any star energy based attack. In the end, it seemed that battle force and his body's physical toughness were his best advantages over Xia Luo. Lu Yin was pretty sure that Xia Luo's physical body wasn't as freakish as his star energy control. With this in mind, Lu Yin stimulated his battle force, causing clear streams of air that were nearly transparent to seep out of his body as his expression became determined.

Xia Luo suddenly lifted a hand. "I admit defeat."

Lu Yin froze along with everyone else. The two of them seemed to be pretty evenly matched and Xia Luo even seemed to hold the upper hand. Why would he suddenly admit defeat?

Xia Luo looked at Lu Yin and bitterly explained, "If you use battle force, what can I do? For now, I still can't do much against battle force."

Lu Yin retracted his battle force and stared straight into Xia Luo's eyes for a while until he was sure that the latter was not lying. Xia Luo really did not have a way to counter battle force, which meant that his weakness was now his body.

Of course, Xia Luo's body wasn't actually weak; this was just speaking relatively. If he was compared to an average Melder, Xia Luo's body was anything but weak. However, when compared to Lu Yin, there was a massive disparity. And on top of that, Lu Yin could also use battle force.

“The winner of the final round is Lu Yin,” Big Pao announced loudly. With this, the new students’ competition had concluded unless someone decided to challenge the results.

“Is there anyone who wants to challenge someone else because they’re dissatisfied with the results?” Little Pao asked.

Zhao Yilong got up with some difficulty and scanned Lu Yin, Xia Luo, and then Silver. After thinking it through, he decided not to challenge them. He knew his place, and, amongst the new students in Astral-10, he was in the weakest tier.

Hui Daynight was just as frustrated. He had lost in the very first round, but after watching Lu Yin and Xia Luo fight, as well as Michelle, Darkvoid, and some of the others, he wisely decided not to challenge anyone. The fame and glory of the Daynight clan seemed worthless here. After witnessing the full competition, he had realized that he might not even be one of the top five new students.

Lulu, on the other hand, seemed eager for another battle. She kept staring at Lu Yin in excitement, but he just ignored her.

“Alright, since nobody wants to challenge anyone, Astral-10’s competition for new students has officially ended. I hereby announce the winner as Lu Yin. From here on out, Lu Yin will be the leader of the new students in Astral-10 and has the responsibility of supervising his peers. The academy also gives him the right to punish other students, within reason of course. Does anybody have any objections?” Little Pao said in a loud voice.

Everyone was startled. Supervise? Punish? That seemed like too much power for one person to hold.

Michelle was the first to raise an objection. “That’s not fair. We came to Astral-10 to learn, and it doesn’t make sense to be supervised by someone who entered at the same time as us.”

Hui Daynight followed up her complaint in a loud voice. “We members of the Daynight clan do not have a habit of following others.”

Meng Yue snorted, but didn’t say a word. However, his opinion was obvious.

No one else spoke, but their faces clearly showed traces of annoyance. Nobody was willing to have a peer stand above them.

Lu Yin himself was astonished. He had never expected something like this to be a part of the competition rewards. If this rule was confirmed to be real, then he’d have the right to judge the other students.

Little Pao swept his gaze over everyone present and said, “The supervision and punishment that I speak of must all be done within reason. Nobody has the right to restrict your freedom. Additionally, the moment he does anything unreasonable, you may voice your disapproval to your mentors. This is a rule that exists not only in Astral-10, but in all of the Astral Combat Academies. The other nine academies have their own leaders, though they have another title—Realm Master.”

Meng Yue and the others were confused by Little Pao’s last words, as they had never heard of the term before. Michelle and Hui Daynight, however, were familiar with the title, and their eyes twinkled. Realm Masters held great authority in the other academies. They hadn’t initially thought much about the title,

but now that they did, it made sense that the Realm Masters were also the leaders of their respective academies. Following that reasoning, the amount of power that Lu Yin held was justifiable.

“The Astral Academy Council has the right to decide the general direction that all the combat academies will develop in. The Ten Arbiters even have the ability to change the structure of the universe. The power that each academy’s leader has over their academy peers isn’t much, and if you have objections, then you can simply leave the academy. Our Astral-10 won’t force you to stay,” Big Pao said in a low voice.

Everyone remained silent, and no one spoke up.

Lu Yin’s eyes shone. Leader, Realm Master? No, a Realm Master was a leader, but being a leader did not necessarily mean that one was also a Realm Master. He wasn’t even at the level of an Area Master right now, but who knew what heights he would reach in the future. His next target was the Nine Trial Zones, as he really wanted to know what an Area Master and even the full power of a Realm Master was like. They were all part of the younger generation and he was curious about just how big the gap between them was.

“By the way, there’s a second reward that’s for all of you,” Little Pao said before looking up at the sky, “Have you made your choices yet, sirs?”

All of the students were confused.

A gruff voice replied. It was the Sandmaster. “Lulu Mavis, Meng Yue, and Schutz, come to the Sand Ocean.”

“Silver, Darkvoid, and Zhao Yilong, come to the Rain Observatory.”

“Zora and Coco, come to the Stargazing Deck.”

“Xia Luo and Hui Daynight, come to the Arena.”

“Lu Yin and Michelle, come to the Treasury.”

Everyone was bewildered. Little Pao smiled at everyone before saying, “Congratulations! The mentors have decided to officially start teaching you. Work hard! An opportunity like this only comes about once a lifetime.”

Everyone grew excited and Lu Yin’s eyes also lit up. The fact that the mentors had decided to teach them was amazing news. He had previously received some pointers from the Rainmaster and Sandmaster; the Rainmaster had helped him breakthrough to the Melder Realm and had even simulated Nine Stacks from Three Stacks. The Sandmaster had shown him the limitless possibilities of Flash, including its ability to tear through the void. Had the mentors finally decided to teach them?

“Hurry up and head to the places that the mentors have mentioned,” Big Pao said enviously. The brothers had attended Astral-10 for many years, but they had never received such treatment.

Xia Luo’s eyes twinkled and he left with a gentle smile.

Silver slowly left with the rest.

Before leaving, Lulu waved her fists at Lu Yin.

Zhao Yilong left with bright eyes. The day would definitely come when he challenged these people again.

This competition had revealed everyone's abilities to each other. Some were left in awe while others were excited.

Michelle was still overwhelmed by what she had seen. The power of Astral-10's new students had far exceeded her expectations. Despite her formidable strength, she had still been eliminated in the first round. This would have been impossible in any of the other academies.

Lu Yin remembered that he and Michelle had been named by Old Cai. He glanced at Michelle. Why was she in a daze?

"Hey, we need to go to the Treasury," Lu Yin shouted at Michelle.

Michelle glanced at him indifferently and then left without a word. Lu Yin was at a loss; this girl was the complete opposite of her sister. One was beautiful and alluring while the other was lovely and as cold as an iceberg. Such a waste of a beautiful face.

After everyone else left, Big Pao sighed ruefully. "I didn't think that our Astral-10 would suddenly gather so many geniuses when it's right on the edge of collapsing. The fact that our director managed to get the mentors to teach them means that he's trying to revive the academy."

Little Pao's eyes shone brightly. "I think that we should also do something so that we won't be looked down upon by our young friends."

Big Pao found this difficult to bear. "It's not a problem for us to become an Area Master, but a Realm Master is in a whole other league. The nine Realm Masters aren't to be trifled with, we might not be able to hold our own against one even if we team up."

"Let's give it a shot. We can't give up as long as there's still hope. Not yet, though. We want to pave their way, but not with our lives," Little Pao muttered.

Big Pao started stretching. "We haven't done much lately, so I wouldn't be surprised if those people have forgotten about us. Back then, we were pretty well-known in Astral-10 arena battles. I hope that there are still some people who remember us."

Things were the same as ever in the Treasury. Old Cai was fiddling with his infinity-shaped beard as he looked at the two who had arrived before him. He lazily said, "Honestly, I don't know how to teach you. All I can do is give you some missions, so do what you can to complete them."

"There isn't any mission that's suitable for me," Michelle said coldly.

Old Cai rolled his eyes. "These won't be missions from the academy, but rather personal ones from me. It's up to you if you want to do them. In the end, I was asked by the director to teach you even though I didn't want to. It's totally fine with me if you don't want to."

Michelle's eyes twinkled as she thought it over. "Fine. I'll do it."

“What about you?” Old Cai glanced at Lu Yin.

He nodded as well. “Fine by me.”

“Since you’re fine with it, first go and win one hundred battles at the arena. Then you can go to the Six Daos.”

Lu Yin was confused. “The Six Daos? I can go there?”

“What a joke. You’ll be allowed in after you win a hundred battles. Now disappear so that I can start thinking about what’s good for this girl,” Old Cai said with an annoyed tone.

Lu Yin glanced at Michelle before leaving.

Old Cai thought it over a bit before his eyes lit up. “I remember now. Back when I was travelling through the Frostwave Weave, I actually found a good place that’s pretty suitable for you.” After saying that, he smirked.

Michelle frowned. How disgusting.

Everyone was busy taking advantage of the opportunity they had just received, and Lu Yin didn’t see Xia Luo or Hui Daynight at the arena; apparently they had been sent elsewhere by the Trialmaster. Lu Yin didn’t speak to the mentor and stepped up to the teleportation stone to start working towards the required one hundred victories.

With Lu Yin’s current strength, there were very few Melders who could defeat him. He could crush almost every Melder; only Limiteers and existences above them could defeat him.

He ended his first day with nineteen victories and five losses. During those battles, he once managed to reach a streak of eight consecutive wins, but then, he had lost to a Limiteer. That Limiteer had used battle force to crush Lu Yin and pulverize his organs. He only had one line of battle force, and while that was just the first stage, it was still much further than Lu Yin’s progression.

On the second day, Lu Yin achieved thirteen wins. His luck was worse than the first day as he even ended up matching against quite a few Explorers and above. One opponent didn’t even give Lu Yin any time to counterattack; he had been suppressed by some unseen force and then defeated in a mere instant. The power of his opponent had left Lu Yin quite shocked, and after that battle, he had to take a full two hours to recover before reentering the teleportation stone.

Chapter 142: Dao of Purgatory

Three days passed. Then four days. Finally, on the fifth day, Lu Yin got his hundredth victory.

“Lu Yin, one hundred wins and seventy three losses.”

Lu Yin walked away from the teleportation stone and let out a heavy sigh of relief; he had finally achieved a record of a hundred wins. It hadn’t been easy; over the past five days, he had been defeated twenty seven times. With his current abilities, he wouldn’t have lost that often if it weren’t for the fact that Explorers and even stronger individuals could participate in the ported battles. Lu Yin could jump levels to challenge people above his realm, and even normal Limiteers were no match for him; only Limiteer geniuses with innate gifts could defeat him. Melders didn’t even need to be mentioned. It was a

pity that the arena placed no limit on cultivation, so anyone in the younger generation could participate by touching a teleportation stone.

Where did all of these young Explorers come from? Lu Yin was speechless.

Over these five days, his best win streak had been twelve consecutive wins, which was a pretty good record. He remembered that Big Pao had once mentioned that winning thirty rounds in a row would give one the right to challenge someone from the Top 100 Rankings of the younger generation. With a bit of luck, Lu Yin felt like he could meet that criterion.

While thinking this, Lu Yin walked towards the Trialmaster and politely asked, "May I enter the trial region?"

The old man cracked his sleepy eyes open a sliver. "Sure, go on in."

Lu Yin was confused. "Go in? Where?"

The old man pointed behind him without saying a word. Lu Yin walked past the old man and stretched out a hand. The space rippled like water, though the ripples spread much slower and much further. The tip of his finger had seemingly vanished, which actually meant that it had entered another space.

Lu Yin had heard rumors of how ultra-Hunters could open their own spaces; it seemed that the rumors were true.

He took a deep breath. It felt like he had just been connected through to another part of the universe, and he immediately retracted his hand due to the strange sensation. Nothing seemed to be off, so he no longer hesitated and entered the invisible space behind the old man.

After Lu Yin left, the old man opened his eyes, appearing to be deep in thought.

After travelling through the rippling space, the scenery before Lu Yin changed. There was no longer an endless plain before him, but rather a massive, towering mountain blocking his path that was incredibly wide. He couldn't even see the peak when he looked up; all he could see were thick clouds that obscured the top of the mountain. Additionally, the entire mountain was surrounded by distorted rays of light, which made it impossible to determine its height.

"Go on. This mountain is the key to entering the Nine Trial Zones. You just have to think the name of the region you want to go to in your mind, and then, like the teleportation stone, your mind will enter that place while leaving your body behind. You'll be protected by the mountain while in this state, and no one will be able to harm you," the Trialmaster's voice echoed in Lu Yin's ear.

Lu Yin peered at the lofty and impressive mountain, astonished that this was a key and the main point of entry into the Nine Trial Zones. This was also the most awe-inspiring piece of wealth that Astral-10 possessed.

Without wasting any time at all, Lu Yin walked into the light and then headed to a random, hollowed out area at the bottom of the mountain. He sat down cross-legged, thought it over, and then silently thought, "Dao of Purgatory." A moment later, it felt like his entire being had travelled back thousands of years, leaving him completely bewildered. When he opened his eyes, all that he could see was black.

Regardless of whether it was the mountains, ground, vegetation, or water, everything was black. He had entered the Dao of Purgatory within the Nine Trial Zones.

Lu Yin took measure of himself and found that his body appeared to be exactly the same as his true body, unlike when he entered the ported battles. Here in the trial zone, his appearance matched his looks in real life. Compared to the ported battles, this place was clearly much more complex.

Lu Yin went to inspect one of the nearby black streams. In the reflection of the dark water, he saw that the number ten written on the back of his hand was giving off a faint glow. This was the symbol of Astral-10.

He strode forward, but then he suddenly felt his mind turn dull as countless strange noises drilled into his ears. They sounded like battle drums but also like the lamentations of numerous people. He had heard this before when his mind was being pressured while his body was dealing with fifty times gravity.

Lu Yin shook his head and sighed with a rueful smile on his face. So this was the trial zone. It was quite interesting and he was curious to find out how large it actually was.

Not too long after Lu Yin entered the Dao of Purgatory, a piece of news was transmitted to the human regions that shocked the universe.

They... had been defeated.

The universe was currently divided into four main regions. The Human Domain, the Astral Beast Domain, the Technocracy, and the Astral Wilderness. These four regions had been locked in brutal wars against each other for countless years that had claimed the lives of countless beings. Everything had been going the same as normal, but recently, the Astral Beast Domain and the Technocracy had allied together to attack the Human Domain. A huge battle had then led to the defeat of the Human region. Numerous experts had been killed, and a portion of the Human Domain's territory had been lost. The Endless Weave had lost a third of its territory, which had become the astral beasts' playground. Astral-9 had managed to flee in time and had not been affected.

Their defeat caused a huge commotion throughout the entire human region. Many were furious, as numerous powerhouses had died and the region had very nearly broken down into chaos.

The astral war had affected all humans, no matter if they were in the Outerverse or in Innerverse, whether they were from the Daynight Family, Mavis Family, or Astral Combat Academies. Every conceivable group had sent out powerhouses to represent the humans in the border battlefields. Their defeat meant that a great deal of battle power had been lost, so much so that the starry sky seemed to dim in response.

Even though there were still people who said that they wanted to fight back, the Human Domain couldn't stand up to the other two Domains on its own. This negative atmosphere was spreading far and wide throughout the Human Domain. With this current mood, the director of Astral-1 had taken a stand, proposing to the Ten Arbiters that the academies should host an Astral Combat Tournament to raise the Domain's morale and strike fear into their enemies.

The Ten Arbiters Council made their decision and agreed to hold a public competition for the entire human region. Every planet that had reached a certain level of development would be able to watch it.

On top of that, they would also be able to see for themselves the power of the Astral Combat Academy, which was the most powerful academy in the universe. As stakes for the competition, Council announced that the winner would gain access to some of the most powerful techniques that had been passed down from ancient times, a seat as one of the sub-committee members on the Ten Arbiters Council, as well as precious items that had been donated by other powerful organizations.

The moment the news was announced, the entire universe grew excited. The news spread like wildfire, and within just a few hours, the information had circulated to the Outerverse, leaving everyone shocked. Soon, the entire universe was aware that the Astral Combat Tournament would be held soon.

Someone from Astral-4 said, "The Interacademy Tournaments have always been a huge event. But this time, because of the loss of our territory, morale has dropped. This must have been organized to lift the human region's spirits, which is why the rewards are so generous. It'll be hard to be number one, but I'll strive to at least be in the top ten."

Someone from Astral-6 responded, "We've been waiting for this moment for a very long time. I don't believe that you're actually strong enough to do as you say. The day of the tournament will be the day of your defeat."

From Astral-7, someone said, "Damn, the rewards are really enticing. All of the hidden disciples from powerful families are sure to surge into the Astral Combat Academy. Competition has always been fierce, but with these geniuses joining, perhaps even the monsters that have been released from their ice seals will take part. This tournament will definitely be on a whole other level from the past competitions."

In Astral-8, someone said, "Don't disturb me, Craynor. Also, keep a close eye on Feng Shang. I want to know exactly how powerful he's gotten. In this tournament, only Realm Masters will have the right to reach the top ten places. Only by defeating him will I have a chance."

In Astral-9, another person said, "In past competitions, the first three academies have always taken up half of the top ten spots, and the strongest have always come from them. I won't accept it! This time, I'll lead the Ninth Academy and become the strongest ever!"

And in Astral-10, the Sandmaster tortured Schutz as he looked at his gadget at the same time, deep in thought. "Are they trying to use this tournament to show off how powerful we humans are and use this opportunity to recruit people? It's a good idea. At the very least, we should be able to see the innate gifts of some powerful families. How nostalgic. I wonder how many people will be scooped up by those people. If someone becomes their disciple, their entire destiny will be changed."

Some people correctly guessed that, the moment news of the Astral Combat Tournament spread, many academies immediately received numerous entrance exam requests. Quite a number came from powerful organizations, and even some ancient organisations that many thought had faded into history had suddenly emerged to take part.

Unfortunately, nobody wanted to join Astral-10. This tournament was way too important and Astral-10 had been at the bottom of the branch academies for so long that no one really believed in them anymore. The only people who were interested in joining were Outerverse organizations, but

unfortunately for them, Astral-10 thought nothing of them. The Sandmaster simply closed Astral-10 and didn't allow anyone in.

Regardless of how chaotic the outside world became, it had nothing to do with Lu Yin. At this very moment, he was standing on a broken bridge. On the other side of the bridge was a man who was coldly staring at him. "Screw off."

Lu Yin narrowed his eyes. "Try to be a bit more polite."

The man glanced at the back of Lu Yin's hand and saw the "ten" marking on it. With a look of contempt on his face, he said, "Astral-10? I haven't seen anyone from there in a long time. I didn't think that there'd be someone from Astral-10 who could come to Dao of Purgatory. I've got just two things to say to you. Screw off, or I'll kill you."

A cold light shone in Lu Yin's eyes before his entire body vanished. In the next moment, he appeared right in front of the man and reached out to grab him. The man viciously said, "You're dead," as he produced a sword that he immediately used to slash at Lu Yin. But with a metallic clang, the blade broke. Lu Yin grabbed the man by the throat and, with just a small amount of force, caused the man's face to turn red. The man kicked out, but that only resulted in him being smashed into the ground by Lu Yin, causing the bridge to collapse.

"Cough, cough." The man spat out some blood and gazed at Lu Yin in astonishment. "Are-Aren't you a Melder?"

Lu Yin snorted. "I can't believe someone with your strength has the gall to be so rude to me. In our Astral-10, you wouldn't even be the second from the bottom."

The man became even more surprised, and he obviously didn't believe Lu Yin in the least. After all, Astral-10 was known for being weak. While the man wasn't exactly strong, he wasn't the weakest either. The person in front of him should be the strongest from Astral-10; his strength simply didn't make any sense otherwise. He could only blame it on his bad luck. No matter how weak the Outerverse was, there'd still be one or two geniuses.

He was actually partially right. Lu Yin was indeed the strongest in the academy; however, Lu Yin was also right as well. Coco was acknowledged as the weakest, but her extreme speed and her huge syringe's defensive abilities meant this guy would be no match for her. He wouldn't even be second from the bottom and thus could only be ranked at the very bottom.

"Tell me where the nearest training spot is," Lu Yin said in a cold voice.

The man was still terrified and immediately replied, "Spear Mountain's less than five hundred kilometers away. The entire mountain is shaped like a spear, and the entire area emanates bloodlust. It's said that someone once comprehended an ultimate spear technique there. You can give that a try."

Lu Yin released him. Spear Mountain?

"Who's the Area Master?" Lu Yin asked.

The man gulped and fearfully answered, "Frankfurt, one of the Area Masters from Astral-6."

"Is he very strong?" Lu Yin asked.

The man nodded. "Yes. He's a peak Limiteer and has comprehended some techniques from Spear Mountain. Also, he has two lines of battle force."

Lu Yin's face changed when he heard the last sentence. Two-lined battle force? That alone proved that Frankfurt was definitely terrifying. Lu Yin had been defeated by someone with just one-lined battle force in the ported battles. With his current abilities, he might be completely helpless against Frankfurt. Were all Area Masters this powerful?

Chapter 143: Spear Mountain

Spear Mountain's Area Master's strength actually wasn't that surprising as both Area Masters and Realm Masters stood at the peak of Limiteers. Although Area Masters were slightly weaker than Realm Masters, they were all still top elites of their academy and the rare few who could potentially battle against a Realm Master.

Apart from Astral-10, the other nine academies all had Realm Masters and Area Masters. There was only one Realm Master in each academy and a handful of Area Masters; they were the true elites of the Astral Combat Academies.

Still, Lu Yin was shocked to hear how powerful Frankfurt was, and he immediately shelved any idea of battling against the Area Master with his current strength. Lu Yin looked at the man. "Why did you ask me to leave when you saw me?"

The guy was surprised by Lu Yin's question. "Is this your first time in the training realm?"

Lu Yin's gaze turned cold, and he waved his hand, shattering the remainder of the bridge. A trace of his Skybeast Claw technique grazed past the man's head, almost drawing blood. The threatening motion prompted him to anxiously answer, "Ancient voices can be heard within the training realm. It could be wails from a battlefield, a warsong, or even skills, but the probability is always very low. Moreover, the more people there are in an area, the lower the chance of hearing anything. Thus, most people don't want to be in an area with anyone else around within the training grounds."

Lu Yin finally understood, but he was still amazed. How was this possible? What an amazing place! Would he be able to hear ancient voices too?

Lu Yin released the man shortly after. In the end, this person was just an average Melder from Astral-6. He didn't know much or even have the qualifications to enter a training ground. Lu Yin had learned everything that he could from the man and was surprised to learn about the number of powerhouses that belonged to the Astral Combat Academy. Fortunately, all of those famous experts were far away from him.

Lu Yin planned on traveling to Spear Mountain to see one of the few training grounds in the Dao of Purgatory. The Dao of Purgatory was a massive region, but all Lu Yin could see was darkness. Lu Yin traveled quite slowly as the gravity was fifty times stronger than normal. He also had to stay on guard for any sudden attacks that might be launched against him. In the Nine Trial Zones, not only were there other students training, but there were also strange beings called war spirits. These spirits weren't actually living beings. Rather, according to what the student he had interrogated earlier had said, these spirits were the memories of students who had previously fought in the training realms. Additionally, they had the same combat abilities as the fighter at the time of their creation.

There was no explanation for the existence of these war spirits, but after years of investigation, it had been repeatedly proven that war spirits were beings without intelligence or visible features. They were just physical bodies that had very strong attacks. Average students were typically defeated whenever they bumped into a war spirit, so their presence increased the danger of the training realms.

Of course, not every battle would create a war spirit, and there was only ever a small probability for one to be created. Otherwise, the spirits would have filled up the entire training realm after all these years.

There weren't a large number of war spirits even in the entire Nine Trial Zones, so the greatest danger in the training realms was still other students.

When Lu Yin first heard of them, he thought that the war spirits' existence was very odd. His initial reaction was that they sounded like opponents that had been intentionally created by the designer of the Nine Trial Zones to adjust to the strength of the cultivators training within. If this training area was thought of as a massive game, then the war spirits would be monsters that were custom made in such a way that they scaled to the power of the cultivators while never being depleted. The stronger the cultivators, the stronger the war spirits that would form.

"Could the training realm possibly have been created by some ancient being from the Astral Combat Academies?" Lu Yin guessed. He looked around and saw a gigantic sphere in the sky. It was one of the moons of the training realm, of which there were three, all pure and bright. The realm even had a day and night cycle, so there was a sun as well.

These three moons illuminated a path through the darkness of the Dao of Purgatory.

The number of footsteps along the illuminated path was increasing, and Lu Yin finally found a used path a few hours later, verifying that he was approaching Spear Mountain.

Bang!

The earth shook as gusts of wind blew through the area, uprooting a few of the black trees.

Lu Yin saw two students battling off in the distance. They were both Limiteers and were both using spears.

"Just give up! You'll never be able to graduate with your ability. As long as I'm here, you shouldn't even think about reaching Spear Mountain!" one of them shouted proudly.

The student opposite him had a solemn gaze. "I'm free to go wherever I want. I will definitely graduate successfully, and I will even join the Ten Arbiters Council!"

"What a joke. The people who can join the Ten Arbiters Council upon graduation are all elites. You definitely don't have such qualifications to do so. Just go and die."

Crash! The earth trembled once again.

There were quite a large number of Limiteers in the Astral Combat Academy. The academies were difficult to enter, but they were even more difficult to graduate from. One could either graduate voluntarily by becoming an Explorer, or be driven out after they became too old to be considered a part of the younger generation. There were many students who had been expelled throughout the

academy's history, and there were probably more expelled students than graduated students since not all students could successfully become an Explorer.

These two Limiteers looked to be no more than ten years older than Lu Yin and were probably around thirty years old. They still had ten more years before the Astral Combat Academy would expel them. If they couldn't become Explorers within that timeframe, then they would be expelled and their names expunged from the Astral Combat Academy's student list.

Lu Yin wasn't interested in their battle, as they clearly had some personal feud that was none of his business. He didn't hesitate to take a detour east to avoid their battle. Spear Mountain was right before him, and he could see the silhouette of a peak reaching into the sky. The silent mountain towered over the ground, as if it were piercing through the air and cause the sky to collapse.

This was Spear Mountain, and Lu Yin looked at it with a fervent gaze. Maybe he would be able to gain something from this place. He grew increasingly excited at the prospect and rushed forward anxiously.

The aura of Spear Mountain intensified the closer he approached. The aura had an indescribable sharpness, and every time Lu Yin looked at it, he felt like his gaze had been stabbed through by something. There were a few times where he even saw the vague image of a spear shooting towards him.

Then, Lu Yin's eyes suddenly lost focus and he abruptly stopped moving. He had heard something that sounded like an anguished roar. The scene before him distorted and he felt like he had been transported back to ancient times. He saw a man slowly lift a spear; this was an ancient spear technique and the man was about to use it. Lu Yin's head suddenly went numb as he sensed impending mortal danger, causing him to take a step back reflexively.

Someone yelled, waking Lu Yin from his trance. There was a man staring at Lu Yin with an icy gaze. His body moved and he launched a spear straight at Lu Yin's head without another word.

Lu Yin was outraged; not only had this person ambushed him, but he had even gone on to attack him for no reason. This man had also interrupted the scene that Lu Yin had just seen. In his eyes, this person deserved death. Lu Yin had no intention to hold back, and he instantly disappeared with Flash before reappearing behind the man. Then, Lu Yin activated his Seven Stars Cosmic Palm and thrust forward, surprising the man. He responded by swinging his spear backwards, grazing past Lu Yin's palm and heading straight towards his head.

A palm and a spear were worlds apart in reach, so Lu Yin was forced to reluctantly redirect his Cosmic Palm towards the spear. The power of the seven stars' explosion surprised the man, and he nearly dropped his spear. In the end, he barely managed to disperse the power of the Cosmic Palm, but despite his success, his palm had been injured by the aftershocks and was covered with blood.

Lu Yin raised his hand to hit the tip of the spear, causing the power of his Nine Stacks to rush toward the man through the spear. The man couldn't keep his grip on the spear anymore and stumbled a few steps back, his face pale as he looked at Lu Yin in disbelief, each step leaving a clear footprint on the ground.

Lu Yin didn't plan on letting the man go. He had been comprehending an ancient scene and had nearly grasped the rare ancient spear technique, but then he had been rudely interrupted by this man. Lu Yin grabbed the spear and stabbed the man with it. Lu Yin's opponent was actually quite powerful; otherwise, he wouldn't have been able to withstand Lu Yin's Cosmic Palm. However, he hadn't reached the level of being able to withstand Lu Yin's Nine Stacks Shockwave Palm, especially after losing his spear. He simply had no way to retaliate against Lu Yin's attack. His body was easily pierced through by his own spear, and he looked at Lu Yin in fury. "You are so cruel."

"You brought this upon yourself," Lu Yin coldly replied as he let go of the spear. He didn't bother asking why the man had attacked, as there were way too many possible reasons. The fact that Lu Yin had been comprehending an ancient scene was more than enough reason to justify his attack. Everyone was selfish, and since Lu Yin had seen the ancient scene, this person had probably assumed that nobody else would be able to see it again and had thus ambushed him. Moreover, Lu Yin was just a Melder and shouldn't be too strong. That's why this person hadn't cared, or maybe there was still another reason—Astral-10.

When someone occupied the weakest position for too long, their former peers would begin to regard them as no longer being qualified to be equals. Astral-10 had not done anything of note for far too long, and now that they had reappeared, they would definitely face ridicule and resistance from others.

Lu Yin had long since learned why Astral-10 had a rule that required its students to win a hundred victories before they were allowed to enter the Nine Trial Zones. However, the more time he spent in the training realm, the deeper his understanding; Astral-10 had been weak for far too long.

The spear stopped moving after a while, and the man's body started fading until it disappeared entirely. This was a training realm and killing was allowed here. However, the person wouldn't truly die as their physical body in their academy would still be fine. Nevertheless, their spirit would be heavily injured by the event, and this man would probably need some time before he could enter the Dao of Purgatory again.

This was just a small setback, but it was still a shame that Lu Yin hadn't been able to comprehend the ancient spear technique.

He looked up at Spear Mountain and noticed that he had almost arrived at the majestic and imposing towering peak. Lu Yin took a deep breath and continued walking forward, but he was soon stopped by two Melder realm students.

"Student, may I know whether you use spears as your weapon?" one of them asked.

Lu Yin's eyes glinted and he shook his head. "No."

"Then you won't be able to continue on to Spear Mountain. Leave," the other person bellowed fiercely.

Lu Yin frowned at this unexpected hurdle. "Why? Who decided that only spear wielders can enter Spear Mountain?"

The two of them glanced at each other and sneered before answering, "This is a rule set down by Senior Frankfurt, the Area Master of Spear Mountain."

Lu Yin hesitated; if that was true, then there was nothing he could do about it. An Area Master held absolute power in the training ground that they ruled over, and no one could object to their rules as long as they weren't too ridiculous. Moreover, Frankfurt was from Astral-6 and the Realm Master of the Dao of Purgatory was also from Astral-6. In some sense, the entire Dao of Purgatory belonged to the Sixth Academy.

Lu Yin paused for a moment before turning around. He needed to think of another idea. At worst, he would just find a random spear and pretend that it was his weapon. He would manage to get in one way or another.

At that moment, a girl casually walked past Lu Yin, headed towards Spear Mountain. However, the two Melder students didn't stop her.

Lu Yin looked at the girl. She was a Melder too, but she hadn't been stopped. "Why didn't you stop her?"

The two who had stopped Lu Yin irritably answered, "We can stop whoever we want. Do we answer to you?"

Lu Yin raised his brow and he saw their gaze sweep across the back of his hand before he finally understood. They must have stopped him because he was from Astral-10. But that was strange as well. Even if people looked down on Astral-10, they shouldn't go so far as to treat students from Astral-10 as enemies. The students from the Astral Combat Academies weren't dumb and wouldn't find trouble for themselves for no reason. Lu Yin thought about it from another angle. What if the two of them were deliberately picking on him? Lu Yin suddenly remembered Xi Yue and how he had a poor reputation within the Astral Combat Academies. He probably had countless enemies among the academies now.

Chapter 144: Enhance

"Do you know me?" Lu Yin narrowed his eyes as he stared at the two in front of him.

A strange look appeared in their eyes and they snorted, "No, so go away. Spear Mountain isn't a place for people like you."

Lu Yin was now certain that they had recognized him, which simplified the situation greatly. They were clearly deliberately causing trouble for him.

"And what if I don't leave?" Lu Yin's voice turned cold as he checked the back of the two students' hands. Even though they tried to cover their hands, Lu Yin still managed to see what he was after—there were two large "eights" on the back of their hands. Astral-8? If he remembered correctly, Xi Yue was from Astral-8, and many of the Blaze Realm's powerhouses were also from Astral-8.

The faces of the two students grew serious. "So you won't be accepting our help, then. Beat it, or else we'll get Frankfurt and he'll teach you a lesson himself."

Lu Yin looked at them with a scornful expression. "You should know who I am, so you must be aware that you're no match for me. However, you still mentioned Frankfurt in an attempt to frighten me. I can't believe that Astral-8 has such cowards as you among its students."

“How dare you!” The two students were infuriated by Lu Yin’s taunts, and they simultaneously attacked. Two spears flew forward at strange angles, sealing the space around them. But Lu Yin merely disregarded their attacks. These two were just Melders, and their control over star energy and ability to solidify it was even worse than Craynor’s. Lu Yin simply raised an arm and grabbed the spears without even trying to dodge the attacks. His Nine Stacks Shockwave Palm shook the area and immediately injured the two’s hands.

Both of the students retreated with looks of astonishment on their faces. They had known from the very beginning that they were no match for Lu Yin, which was why they had tried to chase him away from Spear Mountain so that they could call for reinforcements from Blazing region Limiteers. Unfortunately, they had been goaded into attacking just now and were shocked to learn that Lu Yin was even more powerful than they had imagined. There were rumors that Craynor had been defeated in one attack by this person. But just now, Lu Yin hadn’t even used a full attack to defeat the two of them.

Lu Yin took one step forward and appeared right before the two of them. He used his star energy to seal the area so that the two of them weren’t able to use any battle techniques or escape. He then lifted his palm and pressed downwards.

Rumble!

Shockwaves spread out, distorting the very air.

The girl who had passed by had already travelled quite far, but the sounds of battle still reached her. She looked behind in shock at Lu Yin. He must be incredibly powerful to be able to defeat two people at his level. He might even be one of the top Melders in his academy.

All of a sudden, the girl’s heart lurched and she peered upwards. She heard a whistling sound coming from the top of Spear Mountain. It was a spear, piercing through the air and towards the ground.

It only took Lu Yin a single move to smash the two students into the ground, but just as he was about to use another move to send them flying out of the training zone, he suddenly felt his scalp go numb. He spun around to look upwards and saw a spear diving toward him. The spear wasn’t exactly traveling quickly, but the air was being forcibly displaced by it. Lu Yin knew that he was in a tight spot without any way to escape. This attack was beyond terrifying and it was vastly more oppressive than his star energy; rather than just sealing the area, the attack sealed the void, preventing anyone from blocking.

Lu Yin’s pupils shrank and he raised a hand, planning to fight back with his strongest attack. But then, he stopped. He allowed the spear to pierce through his chest and destroy his organs. His body naturally disappeared from the Dao of Purgatory.

The two Melders from Astral-8 stared at the scene in awe. As they watched the spear gradually disappear before their eyes, they felt a chill crawl down their spine.

“I helped you because of Jared. Tell him that we’ll meet again at the Astral Combat Tournament,” said someone with a bright voice that resounded throughout Spear Mountain. Quite a few people looked up in shock; this was Area Master Frankfurt’s voice while Jared was an Area Master from Astral-8.

The two Melders quickly got up and bowed at the waist before heaving a sigh of relief. They exchanged a look of excitement due to what had just happened; technically, they had taught Lu Yin a lesson on

behalf of the Blaze Realm. This was something that they could report back to Area Master Jared with pride.

Back at Astral-10's mountain, Lu Yin opened his eyes with the accompaniment of a splitting headache that took some time to dissipate. This was a side effect of being killed in the trial region. Whenever someone died in the trial region, they would be mentally injured and would have to spend a significant amount of time recovering before they could enter again. Of course, it was possible to rush back inside immediately, but if they were killed yet again, then the consequences would be even worse. There had even been cases in the past where someone had become an idiot after returning to the trial region too soon after they died.

Even though Lu Yin had been killed, he wasn't very angry. This was just the law of the jungle. Once he became stronger, he'd be able to fight back and take revenge.

Lu Yin actually had the ability to block the attack that had killed him, but he had purposefully chosen not to. He could tell that the attack was not a battle technique and that it was actually nothing more than a casual attack. Such a terrifying attack could have only been launched by Frankfurt. Additionally, Jared from the Blaze Realm was also an Area Master, and it would be strange if the two didn't know each other. Lu Yin had thought it out. Even if he had managed to block the first attack, he wouldn't be able to block the second attack. Thus, the best course of action was to just give up completely. There was no need to reveal all his cards now, and he had no desire to attract another Area Master's attention.

Jared was the real problem in the current situation. People from Astral-8 had tried to cause problems for Lu Yin as soon as they saw him, which meant that Jared must have specifically pointed him out. While Lu Yin couldn't take on all of the students from Astral-8, the ones from just the Blaze Realm wouldn't be a problem as there weren't that many of them. However, there would always be a risk of hidden danger when he moved against someone this powerful. Jared also definitely had friends who were likely as powerful as him. The moment Lu Yin entered a territory belonging to one of his friends, he would likely be identified and targeted. What a hassle...

Astral-10 had always been very noticeable, and after Lu Yin had teased Xi Yue and offended the entire Blaze Realm, many students wanted to beat him up the moment he entered the trial regions. It seemed that, at this point, he needed to find someone who was strong enough to protect him. Otherwise, he'd be hounded to the ends of time if he continued to only rely on himself.

"Who should I go to?" Lu Yin muttered to himself. His first thought was of Lulu. The Mavis family was very terrifying and definitely had extremely powerful people within the Astral Combat Academy. They might even have Realm Masters. However, after thinking it over some more, he ultimately decided not to contact her. Why would the Mavis Family help him? Lulu obviously didn't have a lot of power within her family anyway.

What about Xia Luo? That wouldn't work either. While he was very powerful and mysterious, his lackadaisical attitude meant that trying to borrow his influence would be a complete waste of time.

What about Michelle? No, that girl didn't even want to see him. Darkvoid? Shamrock Enterprises? Lu Yin might not even receive an answer. Hui Daynight? Forget it, Lu Yin was already lucky that the Daynight clan wasn't targeting him. Zora? Coco? Windrift Hall? Nope, none of them were very good at fighting. Zhao Yilong? There was no point in bothering him.

After going through almost everyone that he knew, Lu Yin realized that his last hope was Silver.

Silver had unknown ties to the Neohuman Alliance, and other than Lu Yin, nobody else knew this secret of his. The Neohuman Alliance was something that the entire Human Region feared, which showed just how powerful the organization was. Would it be possible to use this knowledge to threaten Silver? Lu Yin's eyes shone as he estimated his likelihood of success.

After mulling it over for a long time, he ultimately decided to give up. Just the thought of Silver's wolfish, cunning grin gave Lu Yin an uneasy feeling. If he worked with someone like Silver, it meant that he would have to completely subdue him. Otherwise, it would only be a matter of time until he threw Lu Yin under the bus.

After leaving the mountain, Lu Yin passed through the invisible screen and reappeared at the trial zone entrance.

The Trialmaster looked up and glanced at Lu Yin. "You died already? So you still weren't good enough to survive. It seems that a hundred victories is too little. I should increase the number."

Lu Yin was speechless. Increase the number? If it got out that he was the reason why the number to enter the Three Daos Six Realms had increased, then he'd definitely become the common enemy of the other Astral-10 students. "Um, Sir, you can't blame me. An Area Master attacked me."

The Trialmaster was surprised. "An Area Master? You're pretty good at causing trouble, kid! Even an Area Master wanted to kill you."

Lu Yin was at a loss for what to say. "I may have offended a lot of people in the past."

"That makes sense. You look like the type," the Trialmaster mumbled.

Lu Yin's face twitched a little as he answered, "I'll be off then."

The Trialmaster just ignored him.

A similar scene occurred in the treasury. Old Cai looked at Lu Yin as if he were judging a piece of trash. "You got killed that quickly after you went in, huh. Don't ever tell anyone that you're the leader of Astral-10. It's too humiliating."

Lu Yin rolled his eyes in annoyance. It really wasn't his fault! The number of people who could contest an Area Master within the entire Astral Combat Academy was too few. There probably wasn't even anyone in Astral-10 who could do so!

"Enough. Go replenish your star energy. There's a huge difference between someone who just became a Melder and someone at the peak stage," Old Cai said in disdain.

"Yes, Sir," Lu Yin said before turning around to leave.

"Wait, do you have any star crystals? It'll take ages for you to reach the peak stage with the stray bits of star energy in the universe," Old Cai said.

Lu Yin's eyes lit up and he immediately looked at Old Cai excitedly. "No."

The man nodded and did not say a word.

Lu Yin blinked before repeating, "I said, I don't have any, sir."

Old Cai shouted, "If you don't, then go earn some! Why are you wasting your time talking to me? Do you want an old man like me to do it for you?!"

Lu Yin immediately fled. He knew this infinity-bearded man couldn't be trusted. Why would he ever think that this old man would be generous enough give him some crystals?

After finding an isolated area, Lu Yin placed a circle of natural energy crystals around him and began to absorb the star energy. He wanted to use Time Stop to do this, but he decided against it in the end. Absorbing star energy took time, and if he became a peak Melder in less than a second, then even an idiot would suspect that something was off. He also couldn't be sure that no one would see him. Thus, he could only cultivate normally like everyone else.

Lu Yin took out over a thousand cubes of star crystals and crushed them in his hand. As he felt the turbulent star energy wash over him, he activated his Cosmic Art. The effects of a seven-fold increase in his absorption rate was very obvious, and the star energy was sucked in as if he were a tornado. He rapidly absorbed everything.

There was a large difference between a Melder and a Sentinel, but the most apparent difference was the amount of star energy that one could store. It could be said that a Sentinel contained enough star energy reserves to satisfy their needs, even if one's needs were relative. A Melder's reserves, however, were more like a vast sea.

Over the next seven days, Lu Yin absorbed star energy at seven times the standard speed. He used up a hundred thousand cubes of star energy, but it still wasn't enough to bring him to the peak of the Melder realm.

Lu Yin opened his heavy eyes and felt a wave of fatigue wash over him. Absorbing so many impure elements meant that it would be difficult to remove them. He had never expected his cultivation to require so much star energy, where even a hundred thousand cubes wasn't enough for him at this level. Most people didn't need that much. A hundred thousand was quite a terrifying number. If Xi Yue hadn't caused so much trouble for him, then Lu Yin wouldn't have been able to gather such a large quantity in such a short period of time. But despite his vast stores, it had all disappeared in an instant.

He still had twenty thousand star crystals stored in his cosmic ring and another two hundred and fifty thousand in the form of a Mavis Bank crystal card... He should find some time to withdraw some.

For now, though, Lu Yin raised his hand and looked at the die in his palm. It was time to roll it again. The skin that he'd retrieved before had scared the wits out of him, but hopefully, he'd be luckier this time and roll three pips. He still had no idea what that roll could do.

He ended up being pretty lucky. On his first roll, the die stopped on the "three" that had never appeared before.

Lu Yin's breathing turned rough as he watched two golden rays of light appear; one on top and one on the bottom, like two golden screens. They were very dazzling and, a moment later, he discovered their use. He could place items on top of one of the screens and raise its "level."

As soon as the information on what this roll did appeared in Lu Yin's mind, his breathing became even more ragged, and his eyes shone like never before. He first thought about his Cosmic Art—if it was possible to upgrade the crystal for Cosmic Art, then what would have happened? He also had battle techniques, weapons, materials, potions, and much more. Right, and there was also the formcast model...

Lu Yin immediately took out the formcast model from his body. This was the one that the crazy director had given him. He assumed that the Rainmaster had made this precious formcast model so that he could go through his fourth round of reshaping.

Chapter 145: The Lockbreaker Society

A standard formcast model could reshape a cultivator's body three times and help one ascend to the Melder realm. The students of the Great Yu Empire were usually only able to obtain three-stage formcast models, with some luckier ones finding a rare formcast model that was able to conduct four reshaping, which allowed one to become a Limiteer. As for the five-stage formcast models that could assure one of reaching the Explorer realm, those were extremely rare and couldn't be bought with any amount of money, as they were only produced by HUnters after much effort.

There were also six-stage formcast models whose final stage was that of the Hunter realm. These formcast models only existed in legends, as only terrifying powerhouses were able to make them by spending a huge amount of energy. Even the Emperor of the Great Yu Empire, Undying Yushan, was only at the Hunter realm.

Most cultivators would obtain a three-stage formcast model, go through three reshaping, and then train slowly from there on out. Some of the more outstanding cultivators could reach the Explorer realm through reshaping, but that was the absolute limit. Nobody had ever gone through six reshaping except those in the legends, and certainly no one from the Astral Combat Academy had ever accomplished this. This was because only those who were at least as strong a Cruiser could go through six body reshaping, and they would immediately become a Hunter once they broke through.

There was a huge difference between cultivators within the same realm when it came to those who had gone through reshaping and those who had not. Each reshaping completely reconstructed one's body and gave one a chance to perceive some of the strength of the powerhouse who had created that formcast model. This was an extremely valuable experience, and also the main reason why many powerhouses were unwilling to create formcast models. Apart from taking up a huge amount of energy, there was also a chance that the person using it would be able to learn their skills.

The formcast model that Lu Yin had was a four-stage one, which meant that he could go through four reshaping and become a Limiteer. If he upgraded it, then would he get a five stage formcast model? What would that even look like? He would definitely surpass his peers as it was rare for someone to become an Explorer with five reshaping even in the Astral Combat Academy. There was a huge difference between that and becoming an Explorer through cultivation; the difference was as large as that between cultivators and normal soldiers.

Lu Yin truly admired the person who had created the first formcast model, as it had revolutionized the path of cultivation. Before this, cultivators had to spend a long time arduously training even if they had great talent. But now, after the birth of formcast models, many talented young people had managed to

surpass the powerhouses of the older generation. The appearance of the Ten Arbiters was the strongest proof of this phenomena—the ten of them had managed to shift the balance of power to the younger generation's side, creating unimaginable side effects that still hadn't been fully understood.

Lu Yin cleared his mind and took a deep breath. He looked at the two horizontal screens of light in front of him and slowly placed the formcast model on the upper layer. Once the formcast model completely fell through and landed on the second layer, the upgrade would be complete.

Lu Yin stared at it excitedly, but the formcast model didn't move at all. He suddenly realized something. "Does this require star energy too?"

He felt like vomiting blood, but he still took out a hundred star crystals to try his luck with. He threw them onto the top layer, where the crystals were absorbed by the light screen. Although the formcast model moved slightly downwards, the movement was so minute that Lu Yin could barely tell the difference.

Lu Yin clapped his hand to his forehead; he was right. This ability required more star crystals to activate as well. He was struck speechless. His innate gift was powerful, but as greedy as a black hole. Fortunately, he hadn't been so dumb as to try to slowly accumulate money. If not for his money collecting schemes and plots, he definitely wouldn't be able to keep up with his innate gift's appetite.

"Hopefully it won't need too many..." Lu Yin muttered as he took out tens of thousands of star crystals and threw them onto the top layer one by one. After absorbing it all, the formcast model finally descended a little bit more. But only a little bit.

Lu Yin made a rough measurement with his hand and estimated that it would take around three hundred thousand star crystals to upgrade the formcast model to reach the next layer. He sighed and looked at the sky vacantly. He only had two hundred and sixty thousand star crystals on him; that still wouldn't be enough to upgrade his formcast model.

Lu Yin reluctantly stored the formcast model away and watched the light screens disappear. He smiled bitterly and shook his head again, as he had no choice but to wait until he had enough star crystals before he tried to upgrade it again. Fortunately, the formcast model had been slightly modified, and if he rolled Enhance again, then he could simply continue on from where he had left off. He hadn't actually lost anything.

It was extremely rare for anyone to obtain a five stage formcast model, and only cultivators related to the major forces would even have a chance of getting one. Lu Yin knew just how difficult it was to obtain one and that he was already very lucky to have a way to obtain one. Thus, he would find a way to upgrade it no matter how much money it cost. Of course, a five stage formcast wasn't his final goal. His ultimate goal was to obtain a six stage one, but just how many six stage formcast models existed in the universe? While neither he nor anyone else knew exactly how many there were, it was sure to be an extremely small number. Even the entire Blaze Realm might not have a single one, or at least, that was what Lu Yin hoped.

"Is six stages the limit?" Lu Yin suddenly thought of an interesting question. His gaze quickly turned excited, but he immediately suppressed his desire. He would only consider this in the future. If he truly

could obtain a seven stages formcast model, then that would be very interesting. He probably would shock the entire universe.

When he finally noticed that he had just spent tens of thousands of star crystals on nothing but an experiment, Lu Yin realized that his spending was growing more and more excessive.

Lu Yin continued rolling his die, but this time, he no longer hoped to roll Enhance. Now, he was hoping to get Time Stop so that he could steadily cultivate the eighth star of his Cosmic Art. Not only would that increase the speed at which he absorbed star energy, but it would also increase the power of his Cosmic Palm technique. According to his estimate, a Cosmic Palm with eight stars would be more powerful than a Nine Stacks Shockwave Palm, and that wasn't even taking into the effects of battle force. He looked forward to finding out just how strong it would be.

He rolled the die again and it stopped on Pilfer. An exquisite ring fell with a loud clang. It was made out of a common material, but Lu Yin was astonished by the craftsmanship. The carvings on the clear metal seemed to have a life of its own; however, it was a shame that it didn't have any intrinsic value. Still, it should be quite expensive due to how exquisite its craftsmanship was.

His third roll turned out to be Gift Copy. What a waste. He now realised that Possession and Enhance weren't the most wasteful, and neither was it even Pilfer. Rather, it was actually Gift Copy. It was clearly a good skill as it allowed him to temporarily borrow someone's innate gift, but it was always wasted since he was always rolling his die in a remote area. I have to pay attention next time. I can borrow someone's innate gift with it, so I shouldn't waste it.

Lu Yin had one more chance to roll, as he would faint after rolling it five times. Hence, four times was the ideal number.

He stared at the die until it stopped spinning and settled on a number—Four. Lu Yin knew that his luck today was quite good as he had gotten both Enhance and Timestop.

His surroundings disappeared before his eyes and he appeared in the familiar grey Time Stop Space. He increased the gravity by sixty times like he normally did, but that wasn't enough this time. He took out more star crystals and continued increasing the gravity until he felt strained, which was at a hundred-fold. This was a hundred times the normal gravity! It was a pressure that, normally, only Limiteers could possibly withstand, which led Lu Yin to guess that his body had already surpassed most Limiteers'. And this still wasn't his ultimate limit!

Lu Yin didn't know why his body had become so terrifyingly tough and strong, but he could tell that it was still improving with each passing day. He stopped thinking about it and used over a thousand star crystals to increase the time that he had in the Time Stop Space to one month. He planned on staying in this space for a month to finish cultivating the eighth star of his Cosmic Art.

When Lu Yin entered the Time Stop Space, a spacecraft appeared at Astral-10's space station. There was an interesting symbol carved on its helm that seemed to be from the Innerverse: two hands covering a planet.

Xia Luo's eyes gleamed when he saw this symbol, as it was the Lockbreaker Society's insignia!

Lockbreakers enjoyed many privileges in the universe, and the Lockbreaker Society had been formed to oversee the Lockbreakers. Its main purpose was to gather Lockbreakers together in order to test the limits of their skill, but everyone knew that another reason for its existence was to control the Lockbreakers, as there would be disastrous consequences if a Lockbreaker went rogue.

Many sealed ancient items could cause disasters, if they were recklessly unsealed by a Lockbreaker, it could lead to a catastrophe striking the universe. This could not be allowed to happen, and so the Lockbreaker Society received great support from various major forces which guaranteed its status and legitimacy.

A few days ago, the Trialmaster had sent out an examination request to the Lockbreaker Society on behalf of Xia Luo. He wanted to have Xia Luo join the society as he was clearly capable of doing so.

Xia Luo moved forward as the hatch of the spacecraft opened.

The first to disembark were a troop of cultivators. They were soldiers of the Lockbreaker Society, and they were all at least Melders, and some were even Limiteers. Behind them, a middle aged man in a grey robe walked out with a solemn expression. He immediately noticed Xia Luo as he slowly descended from the spaceship.

A beautiful girl, about Lu Yin's age, followed behind the middle aged man. Her nose was turned up to the sky, and she made no efforts to hide her arrogance.

Xia Luo walked forward with a smile. bowed towards the man in the grey robe, and introduced himself. "Greetings, Master Wusheng. I am Xia Luo from Astral-10."

The middle aged man nodded as he studied Xia Luo for a moment. He then nodded his head in satisfaction. "You are the person that Elder Tan mentioned to me?"

Xia Luo answered, "Yes, I am."

Wusheng continued to say, "Let's go. I want to greet Elder Tan first."

"Tutor, please follow me this way." Xia Luo then motioned in the direction for them to go and politely nodded at the girl before turning around to lead the way for them.

The girl looked at Xia Luo curiously. Her name was Liu Ji and she had come on this trip to take Astral-6's entrance exam. However, they had suddenly taken a detour here, apparently to scout a student from Astral-10 for the Lockbreaker assessment. Astral-10? Wasn't that academy driven out of the Innervse? How could one of their students join the Lockbreaker Society? The situation didn't make any sense to her.

Once she saw Xia Luo, Liu Ji felt an instinctive affinity toward him, but she still had no confidence in him passing the assessment. She was well aware of just how difficult the Lockbreaker assessment was, and even she, a natural genius who was born into the society, had to take the test multiple times before she finally passed. What gave this person the confidence to think that he would pass the exam?

The three of them appeared at the realm entrance via the teleportation equipment and coincidentally met someone who was about to leave, Hui Daynight.

Hui Daynight just glanced at the three of them before proceeding into the teleportation device without a word.

Wusheng was shocked. “Isn’t he from the Daynight clan? I didn’t expect someone from the Daynight clan to join Astral-10.”

Xia Luo smiled as he explained, “His name is Hui Daynight. And yes, he’s from the Daynight Clan. He’s a nice person.”

Liu Ji raised her brows questioningly. A nice person? Why would he say that? The student who had just left was obviously extremely arrogant, even more so than herself. He hadn’t even greeted Master Wusheng! Even a senior of the Daynight Clan wouldn’t dare to be so rude. It was truly an annoying clan.

But as far as Xia Luo was concerned, as long as someone wasn’t his enemy, then everyone was a nice person—or, at least, that was his personal view.

The Trialmaster was sitting in the same spot as always, with the appearance of a senile old man.

Wusheng’s expression changed once he saw the Trialmaster and he immediately went forward and said respectfully, “Elder Tan, your student, Wusheng, has come to greet you.”

Surprise flashed across Xia Luo’s eyes while Liu Ji’s mouth actually fell wide open. Is this really Master Wusheng, acting this respectfully to that old man? He’s Master Wusheng, an Intermediate-rank Lockbreaker who’s nearly at the Senior level! Even the most powerful clans of the Inniverse would act deferentially to Master Wusheng, and yet here he was, acting respectfully to a mentor of Astral-10?

Chapter 146: Who’s the Top Student?

The Lockbreaker Society had divided lockbreakers into several different levels, which were broad yet clearly defined. In ascending order, these levels were: Junior, Intermediate, Senior, and any higher levels were classified. The Junior level corresponded to Melders and Limiteers, the Intermediate level to Explorers and Cruisers, and the Senior level to Hunters. There were very few people who could surpass these classifications and become a high leveled lockbreaker at a low realm.

Wusheng was an Intermediate lockbreaker, but his knowledge of lockbreaking was actually at the Senior level. Once he became a Hunter, he would immediately be promoted to Senior Lockbreaker. There weren’t many Senior Lockbreakers in the entire universe, and they were people who most major forces sought after.

Furthermore, as a general rule, Lockbreakers were strong for their level and extremely powerful. Every lockbreaker had terrifying control over their star energy and could easily battle against people above their realms. Wusheng’s Lockbreaker level combined with his terrifying battle power meant that his status was exceeded even that of a Hunter realm cultivator. This was also why Liu Ji was so surprised by Wusheng’s respectful attitude towards this academy mentor. Astral-10 was just a driven out academy, and apart from the Headmaster who had gone crazy, there shouldn’t be anyone here that merited Master Wusheng’s deferential attitude.

The Trialmaster slowly opened his eyes. “Oh, it’s Wusheng. You’ve grown older.”

This sentence almost caused Liu Ji to faint.

Wusheng, however, still remained respectful. "It's been too long. It's wonderful that Elder Tan is still as healthy as ever."

The Trialmaster laughed in response. "You still speak as glibly as ever. Take a look, that's the young man I was telling you about. Give him a test and see if he'll be able to join the society."

Wusheng solemnly said, "There's no need to test him. Since you have officially requested the society to assess him, there's no way that you would be wrong about his abilities. I trust your judgement." He then turned to Xia Luo and seriously said, "Xia Luo, let me ask you this. Are you willing to join the Lockbreaker Society and formally become a Junior Lockbreaker?"

Xia Luo took a deep breath, walked towards Wusheng, and respectfully answered, "I'm willing to dedicate the rest of my life to the Lockbreaker Society."

Wusheng nodded and passed a badge to Xia Luo. "I have added your name into the society's member list. From now onwards, you are a member of the Lockbreaker Society."

"Thank you, Master Wusheng," Xia Luo answered respectfully.

Wusheng nodded in a satisfied manner. He looked at the Realm Tutor and asked, "Elder Tan, are you satisfied?"

The realm tutor casually replied, "None of this is related to me. If this young guy embarrasses the Lockbreaker Society, then that's all your fault. Who asked you to waive his assessment."

Wusheng continued, saying, "Actually, I was planning on asking Elder Tan some questions on this trip here. May I?"

The Trialmaster nodded and sighed. "I've enjoyed the benefits given by the society for so many years, but I've never contributed anything. That's my fault. Since you've come to visit me, then stay a while before you leave."

Wusheng was elated. "Thank you Elder Tan." He then turned around and told Liu Ji, "Go and take a look around Astral-10."

"Master Wusheng, I'll show her around," Xia Luo offered.

Wusheng nodded. "Sure." He then sat next to the Realm Tutor and immediately started quietly discussing with him.

Xia Luo politely gestured at Liu Ji. "Please."

Liu Ji nodded, but she felt slightly uncomfortable. She had been born into the Lockbreaker Society, but even then, she had to spend a great deal of time studying and preparing herself before she had qualified to join the society. However, this person had joined without even taking an assessment. If not for the fact that she didn't dare to refute Master Wusheng, then she would have definitely objected.

Nevertheless, although there was nothing she could officially do now since Master Wusheng had already agreed, she had still resolved herself to not be nice to Xia Luo. Despite her attitude, Xia Luo was very gentle and hadn't minded the fact that Liu Ji didn't bother introducing herself.

He brought her to the Rain Observatory.

The rain in the Rain Observatory never ceased pouring, and the entire area was covered with a dull green sky filled with green branches. Most people couldn't tell that these branches all came from the same gigantic tree unless someone told them.

Liu Ji wasn't very interested in the Rain Observatory since Lockbreakers already had a very high level of control over their star energy. Their standard of control over star energy was different from the standards that Lu Yin and the others followed. They had a unique understanding and knowledge of star energy that only Lockbreakers possessed; if not for this heightened sensibility, then any cultivator who had a slightly above average control over their star energy could become a Lockbreaker.

Liu Ji wanted to increase her battle experience and lockbreaking skills, which were things that couldn't be obtained from looking at rain. So, she prepared to leave as soon as she entered.

At this moment, a black dot rapidly flew over, his dark black hair absorbing all of the light around him. He leapt past Liu Ji and stepped into the teleportation device. It was Darkvoid.

Liu Ji became furious at Darkvoid's actions. "Stop, what's wrong with you? Didn't you see that I was about to leave? You're so rude!"

Darkvoid glanced at Liu Ji, but he merely ignored her and continued to leave.

Liu Ji snorted. She then lifted her hand and disturbed the surrounding star energy with her palm in an attempt to suppress Darkvoid. She was a Lockbreaker and had a high battle power even if she didn't use battle techniques. None of that mattered; Lockbreakers represented power.

Darkvoid lifted his hand up as well, and his fingers twitched slightly, causing the space in front of Liu Ji to erupt. Her face paled and she immediately retreated. The air distorted and a wave of energy washed over her, pushing the rain apart and causing the star energy that had been dispersed by Liu Ji to recover. By the time Liu Ji recovered from her shock, Darkvoid was already gone.

Liu Ji was stunned. "Did he just shatter space?! How is that possible? He's just a Melder! How is he so strong?"

"It's his innate gift," Xia Luo said with a smile.

Liu Ji was astonished. "Innate gift? So he has a space-related innate gift. Was that guy just now the top student of Astral-10?" In her mind, someone with this unique of an ability would naturally be the top student.

Xia Luo shrugged as he replied, "No."

Liu Ji was surprised. "He's not the top student?"

Xia Luo smiled but didn't bother explaining any further. The outside world looked down upon Astral-10, but they didn't know that this academy was actually very powerful. The battle power that the new students had shown during the New Student Competition was already enough to astonish the other academies. And now, after they had received personal guidance from the mentors, no one really knew how far their fellow students had progressed.

Liu Ji was astounded and looked at Xia Luo. "Take me to meet your top student. Rumor has it that most of the old students from Astral-10 have left, so there should only be Melders here. I want to see the innate gift of the top student that can defeat a Melder who can shatter space."

Xia Luo helplessly answered, "I'm sorry, but I don't know where he currently is. Do you mind if we search for him?"

Liu Ji nodded. "I have lots of time. Let's go."

Xia Luo smiled and brought her to the Sand Ocean next.

Liu Ji saw something surprising as soon as she reached the Sand Ocean; there was a girl who was practicing, her every punch shaking the desert. The vibrations surprised Liu Ji as she could feel the terrifying strength of the girl through the reverberations of the earth underneath them. How powerful was that punch just now?

"Who is she?" Liu Ji was shocked.

Xia Luo replied, "A new student. She's quite nice."

"Not the top student?"

"No."

"Next place."

They went to the Stargazing Deck next, where Zora and Coco were. Both of them were struck speechless by the sight of Coco embracing her enormous syringe for no apparent reason. The sight disturbed Liu Ji so much that she instinctively took a few steps back upon seeing the syringe. Most girls were scared of that ominous looking thing.

Coco's eyes sparkled when she saw Xia Luo. "Brother Xia, why did you come here? Are you injured? You'll be fine once you get an injection."

Xia Luo retreated with a smile. "No, I'm not injured." He quickly brought Liu Ji away as well; he was also quite frightened of that syringe. No one had allowed Coco to give them an injection yet, and Xia Luo was also curious about what the effects would be.

"The girl just now was quite strong. Would you like to take her offer?" Xia Luo tried to tempt Liu Ji.

Liu Ji immediately shook her head. "No, thanks."

Xia Luo was slightly regretful at the lost opportunity.

After a while, the two of them reached the Treasury, where they bumped into Silver, who was wearing his perpetual, superficial smile on his face.

As soon as she saw Silver, Liu Ji's gaze changed. If Xia Luo gave her a familiar feeling, then this person gave her the chills. Both men were all smiles, but they gave her two entirely different feelings. When her

eyes met Silver's, Liu Ji felt a piercing pain in her eyes and a great threat in her heart; this person was able to threaten her life.

"Brother Xia, what a coincidence," Silver said with a smile.

Xia Luo's face sank when he saw Silver and he just nodded in greetings.

Silver then turned to Liu Ji and exclaimed, "What a beautiful girl! Is she a new junior? I heard that many new students will be joining us to participate in the Astral Combat Tournament."

Xia Luo replied with a simple, "No."

"What a shame. I wanted to spend time with this junior," Silver then shrugged and left after waving at Liu Ji.

Liu Ji's expression was grim. What a scary man! She wasn't thinking about his abilities, but rather about his aura. This was the first time that she had ever felt such terror from just seeing someone.

"How powerful is he?" Liu Ji was curious.

Xia Luo shook his head. "Not sure."

"Since your academy has a top student, then there was definitely a competition. How can you not know?" Liu Ji thought Xia Luo was lying to her.

Xia Luo calmly answered, "He admitted defeat in the middle, so nobody knows the depths of his strength."

Liu Ji narrowed her eyes. Her only thought was that Astral-10 definitely wasn't simple. Everyone she had met so far were either weird or geniuses, but they were all very strong. If Xia Luo truly had the right to be a Lockbreaker, then there was no way that he would be weak either. Liu Ji was confident that she was one of the stronger Melders in the Astral Combat Academy, but the few people that she had met today were all comparable to her. Astral-10 had truly hidden itself well.

Suddenly, a thought occurred to Liu Ji and she gave Xia Luo an odd look. "Are you the top student?"

Xia Luo laughed before replying, "Of course not. By the way, I still don't know your name yet."

"Liu Ji."

"Liu Ji? What a nice name," Xia Luo complimented.

Liu Ji frowned. "Are there only these few places in Astral-10?"

"I'm sorry. Most of the locations in Astral-10 were destroyed and there are only these few places left," Xia Luo answered with a helpless shrug.

Liu Ji had heard about that as well. According to the rumors, the Headmaster of Astral-10 had gone crazy and destroyed the entirety of Astral-10, including its collection of battle techniques, skills, and weapons, all of which had been gathered over countless years. This had caused Astral-10 to deteriorate rapidly until it reached its current state of near collapse.

After Xia Luo was done taking Liu Ji around, Lu Yin had already left the Time Stop Space. After spending a full month in there, he had finally finished cultivating the eighth star of his Cosmic Art. As expected, the power of his Cosmic Palm now surpassed his Nine Stacks Shockwave Palm. Despite this improvement, it also signified that Lu Yin had reached the end of his path with this Cosmic Art.

Lu Yin sighed as he realized that this art that had accompanied him and helped him through several challenges had reached the end of its road. The Cosmic Art manual that he had initially obtained had only ever talked about cultivating up to eight stars, and although Lu Yin had tried to theorize the next star, he had been unsuccessful in his attempt. This was an ancient art and not something that he could extrapolate on his own.

Chapter 147: The Ninth Star

I wonder if one of the academy mentors can extrapolate the next level of this Cosmic Art, Lu Yin thought to himself. But in the end, he decided that it wasn't possible. This Cosmic Art was far more powerful than he had initially imagined. A mere eight stars was already this powerful. It was beyond any battle technique that he had seen, and it was also an ancient battle technique that not just anyone in the present could deduce.

He told himself to forget about it, but he just couldn't quash his yearning desire to learn the next level of the skill! Even as Lu Yin became resigned to his fate, he stretched out his hand, causing eight stars to revolve around his palm. It was a beautiful sight to behold.

"One is missing." All of a sudden, a wavering voice spoke into Lu Yin's ear, startling him so badly that he leaped up. He reflexively used his Flash technique to run away, but the voice continued to pursue him relentlessly. "The fact that one is missing is such a shame. It makes everything imperfect."

Lu Yin stopped moving and slowly turned around, his face as white as a sheet. He had a feeling that his biggest secret had just been exposed—after all, he had just come out of the Time Stop Space a moment ago! Also, could the owner of this voice actually see when Lu Yin had activated his Cosmic Art? This was something beyond most people.

What greeted him was an old, wrinkly face that Lu Yin recognized. It had left a deep impression on him, as this was the crazy director's face, the same one who had nearly killed him!

At this time, the crazy director's eyes were murky, and he only seemed to be able to focus on Lu Yin's palm. More precisely, he was focused on the eight stars rotating around it.

Lu Yin cleared his throat and said, "I am Student Lu Yin. I have met you before, Director."

The crazy director did not care about Lu Yin's introduction and continued to stare at his Cosmic Palm intensely. His eyes slowly lit up and he let out a maniacal cackle. "Haha, I remember now! One star is indeed missing. Eight stars are imperfect, but the addition of one more star to take it to nine would make it complete. Yes, that is it! Haha."

Lu Yin's heart was shaken, and he had to forcibly stop himself from letting the stars dissipate. He had a suspicion that he might have just received an unbelievably good stroke of luck from this crazy director. "Cra- I mean, Director, have you seen this technique before?"

The crazy director continued to laugh rabidly and mutter to himself under his breath, as though he had remembered something. Lu Yin waved his Cosmic Palm in front of the crazy director, and with feigned sigh, he said, "How can I make the ninth star appear? I don't know."

The crazy director's mouth fell wide open, and he stared at Lu Yin in disbelief. "You really don't know?"

Lu Yin nodded. "That is correct."

"Well, I do! Haha! I know how to do it!" The crazy director let out an earth shattering howl of laughter.

Lu Yin eagerly anticipated this unexpected boon. "You know how to do it? I don't believe you."

The crazy director stared hard at Lu Yin. "I said that I know how to do it. I really do."

"I still don't believe you."

"You must believe me."

"I won't believe you until I see the ninth star."

The crazy director let out a long sigh and ran a hand through his frazzled hair before saying, "You will be the death of me! Alright then, let me show you the ninth star. I have to make you believe me."

After saying that, he grabbed Lu Yin's hands and pressed his own palm against Lu Yin's. An indescribably peculiar ripple spread out when the two palms met, filling Astral-10 before shooting into the sky. This abnormally powerful ripple went unnoticed by everyone else, including Old Cai, the Trialmaster, and the other mentors. At this moment, only Lu Yin could feel the rippling sensation.

He was now firsthand experiencing a transformation that was even more mysterious than his rudimentary Cosmic Art. Although he did not know if this was truly the next stage of the Cosmic Art, he was certain that it was more powerful than the eight stars version because he could see the faint image of the ninth shining from within his body.

But the way this ninth star was forming was completely different from the previous stars. If the stars had previously been forcibly coalesced, then the ninth star was like the final piece of a puzzle falling neatly into place.

Lu Yin's mind slowed down as he stared at the stars surrounding him. They weren't real, but their appearance was impossibly authentic, making him feel as if he had been thrust into an unimaginably terrifying realm consisting of nine stars. This ninth star had changed the intrinsic nature of the technique, whereas before this point, each additional star had slightly increased the power of the technique. Now, not even Lu Yin had any idea of how powerful it was. The explosion of a single star could distort the void, so what would happen if an entire star field exploded?

Suddenly, the stars surrounding his body disappeared, and Lu Yin closed his eyes. The insane director turned his head up to gaze at the skies above them as he cried out, "You! Yes, you! Don't run! You started the war, and now you have to bear the consequences! Do not flee." With that outburst, the crazy director took to the skies and quickly vanished.

Lu Yin was disappointed that the crazy director hadn't completely simulated the ninth star of the technique. Lu Yin could feel how much more powerful his physical body had become, although he still

didn't truly know his body's limits. Still, the Cosmic Palm that he had just witnessed left him shaking in the wake of its power. Just from that brief moment of contemplation, Lu Yin had gained incredible insights into the movements of astral bodies, and his face grew heated as he considered all the new possibilities that had opened up to him. If the Cosmic Palm was remodeled around a star system, then could more stars be added to it, like how the original eight had functioned?

This was a radical idea, but it didn't seem to be completely impossible. Lu Yin's breath turned ragged, and he urgently wanted to relive the sensation that he had felt with the director's simulation earlier. That brief expression had triggered a fundamental change in his abilities.

Lu Yin decided to act on his impulses, and he sat down crossed-legged to start meditating. He soon cleared his mind and focused his concentration.

After an hour passed, he opened his eyes. He could still recall the sensation of the ninth star, but he couldn't cause it to appear; it was definitely harder to cultivate than the eighth star. And since it had taken Lu Yin nearly two months to cultivate the eighth star, the creation of the ninth would undoubtedly take even more time. This was not something that could be rushed, so he decided that he would focus on this the next time he rolled Time Stop. He could stay inside that frozen space for three months, and Lu Yin was confident that he would be able to manifest the ninth star after cultivating the skill for that long.

Lu Yin stood up and stretched, feeling the numbness leave his body. What should he do next? He couldn't just keep cultivating, and the Nine Trial Zones wasn't a good choice right now as, without any backing, returning would just be asking for trouble. He only had one real option left: make money. Since he had some free time, he should go and earn some money, especially since his innate gift required so much star energy.

Soon after, Lu Yin arrived at the Treasury. By then, Xia Luo had already left with Liu Ji.

When Old Cai saw Lu Yin, his eyes lit up and the curiosity in his voice was palpable as he asked, "Hey kid, you're really quite rich. Your star energy has increased a lot in just a few days, huh? You must have already used up thousands of star crystals to do that."

Lu Yin smiled. "I was just lucky to get a large sum recently, nothing more."

Old Cai grunted in annoyance. "It's not like I wanted any from you. There's no need to be scared."

Lu Yin laughed, embarrassed. He just felt that he couldn't trust the moustached man in front of him. The "Cai" in Old Cai's name already showed how greedy the old man was for riches, so it was best to not appear too wealthy in front of him.

"Old Cai, I am looking to take on some missions. The most ideal ones would be situated near the Zenyu Star of the Great Yu Empire," Lu Yin said.

Old Cai grunted in acknowledgment. "With your current ability, you're really stuck in the middle. There's indeed not much you can do besides take on missions." As he spoke, he opened up his mission file, picked out a few of them, and then handed them over. "Choose one. It'd be best if you picked a harder one than an easier one. You don't have much time."

"I don't have much time? What time are you referring to?" Lu Yin asked, puzzled.

Old Cai was taken aback by his question. "Haven't you heard about the Astral Combat Tournament?"

Lu Yin was startled. "The Astral Combat Tournament? When is that?"

Old Cai was flabbergasted for a while before he finally remembered that Lu Yin had been in the Nine Trial Zones when this news was released. No wonder he didn't know about it. "Kid, do you know about how this universe is divided up?"

Lu Yin nodded his head. "Are you referring to the four Domains?"

Old Cai couldn't stop himself from bursting out in laughter. "No, to be exact, there are only three Domains. The Human Domain, the Astral Beast Domain, and the Technocracy. The Astral Wilderness can't truly be counted as a Domain as no one knows how big it is. For many years, the battle between the Domains has been escalating, and a while ago, the Human Domain was defeated..."

A while later, Lu Yin was finally informed of the recent events; it was rather shocking information. The Astral Combat Tournament had been announced after the defeat of the Human Domain not just to boost morale, but also to recruit more troops. Of course, there was also another reason, which was to draw out all of the hidden monstrous talents from the various powerhouse organizations. Whatever the reasons were, this Astral Combat Tournament would be of an unprecedented scale.

"What is its actual start date?" Lu Yin asked hurriedly.

Old Cai shook his head. "It hasn't been decided yet. They'll only be able to decide and announce it after all the civilizations get their networks back online and connected."

Lu Yin pondered his words. Connecting all of the networks? After mulling it over some more, he realized that this was yet another goal of the event organizers. This network would span the entire universe, making their information relay system even more interconnected. Their current technology could definitely accomplish this, but it had not been implemented yet. Someone somewhere must have had some misgivings about joining a universal network, but the powers at be were now using the Human Domain's recent defeat to hurry things along. Despite the pending implementation of the network, there were bound to be various limitations to the network until after the Astral Combat Tournament.

Old Cai looked through the list of available missions, assuming that Lu Yin was still preoccupied with the news about the Astral Combat Tournament. He was completely unaware that Lu Yin's mind had already drifted to a faraway place. Lu Yin wasn't too concerned by Old Cai's assumptions. This was just how his thoughts naturally flowed.

"There are no missions near the Zenyu Star of the Great Yu Empire," Old Cai casually remarked after looking through the list.

Lu Yin grunted in acknowledgment before looking through the list himself. Since there wasn't a mission in his preferred location, then he would just pick one at random.

At this time, a new mission popped up: "Protect the Irven Merchants by providing them with safe passage through the war-zones all the way to the first region of the Great Yu Empire in the Frostwave Weave."

Lu Yin tapped on it for further information. The first region of the Great Yu Empire was where the Zenyu Star was located. This mission couldn't have appeared at a better time. "Old Cai, are these Irven Merchants also a sponsor of our Astral-10?"

"Of course not. These are missions that are passed on to us by the Mercenary Association. The Association is one of the sponsors of our Astral Combat Academy, so they often send us missions at certain times," Old Cai replied.

Lu Yin understood and realized that this was why there were so many weird missions. "I'll be off then, Old Cai. Do you have anything else to tell me?" Lu Yin asked.

Old Cai waved him off. "Try to refill your star energy as quickly as you can. That is your sole mission."

Lu Yin nodded and left.

At the same time, at a space station in Astral-10, Master Wusheng walked out from the teleportation device. Xia Luo followed behind and respectfully said, "Take care, Master."

Master Wusheng nodded and looked towards Liu Ji. When he saw that she seemed a little preoccupied, he asked, "Liu Ji, what is the matter?"

Liu Ji shook her head. "It's nothing."

Master Wusheng didn't press her further. He looked back to Xia Luo. He trusted Elder Tan's recommendation, and Elder Tan definitely had a good understanding of this student's abilities if he had recommended that he join the Lockbreaker research group. After Wusheng finished thinking about all this, he took out an orb covered in a thin metal film from his cosmic ring. When the film was removed, Xia Luo saw that the orb was transparent. Dazzling star energy was radiant outwards from it, causing fluctuations in the very air.

"This is a starburst orb, and the Lockbreaker Society uses these to test its potential candidates. See how long you need to neutralize the star energy inside," Master Wusheng explained as he passed the orb to Xia Luo.

Xia Luo asked out of curiosity, "How long do most people take to neutralize the energy on their first try?"

Master Wusheng casually replied, "Ten seconds for most. Those who solve it within five are considered good, and those who solve it within three are the elite."

Xia Luo's eyes twinkled. Elite? He then looked towards Liu Ji.

"Liu Ji is one of the few who can neutralize it in three seconds," Master Wusheng said when he noticed Xia Luo's gaze.

Chapter 148: Playing With Balls

Xia Luo nodded. He held the starburst orb and replied with a serious expression, "I'm going to start now." One, two, three seconds passed before the surging star energy within the orb started to dissipate, only completely calming down after five seconds.

Liu Ji was surprised; he had actually succeeded in five seconds.

Master Wusheng wasn't too surprised since Xia Luo had been recommended by Elder Tan. He smiled and said, "Not bad at all. This is a good result, especially when considering that this is your first time interacting with a starburst orb. Your potential is similar to Liu Ji's. Elder Tan's recommendation is perfectly justified. You may keep this starburst orb for yourself."

Xia Luo placed the thin metal covering back over the orb and stored it away. "Thank you, Master."

"Alright, you can return now," Master Wusheng said.

Xia Luo understood that Master Wusheng probably wanted to talk to Liu Ji alone, so he nodded and left through the teleportation device.

After Xia Luo left, Master Wusheng looked at Liu Ji and asked, "What's wrong? You look strange."

Liu Ji solemnly replied, "This academy isn't as simple as we had first assumed. I saw quite a few geniuses here."

"That's normal. After all, the Outerverse is bound to give rise to some geniuses. Didn't Wendy Yushan from the Great Yu Empire in the Frostwave Weave break into the top twenty of the Astral Battle Leaderboards? I was astonished by her results as well. The Outerverse is enormous, and you don't have to worry about the fact that there are a few geniuses here," Master Wusheng explained.

Liu Ji agreed, but she still wanted to meet the top student. Just how powerful did the top student have to be for him to be able to defeat all of the students that she had seen so far? Liuyi was extremely curious.

"You haven't neutralized a starburst orb in a long time, correct?" Master Wusheng suddenly said while looking at Liu Ji.

Liu Ji was caught off guard by his question, but she nodded slowly.

Master Wusheng took out another starburst orb and passed it to Liu Ji. "Try and see if you can wipe out the star energy instantly."

Liu Ji muttered to herself, "How is that even possible? Only geniuses can do that." But despite her misgivings, she did her best to instantly wipe out the surging star energy. At that moment, someone appeared in the teleportation device. Wusheng and Liu Ji turned around to see Lu Yin appear.

When Lu Yin entered the space station, he hadn't expected other people to be there, let alone two strangers. Was that a girl playing with a ball?

He was even more shocked to see a girl seemingly playing with a ball in Astral-10's space station, but the ball did look rather intriguing with star energy surging from within it.

The starburst orb exploded with a bang as Liu Ji was distracted by Lu Yin's sudden appearance, causing her to accidentally fail.

"Be as calm as water. Is this the extent of your current abilities?" Master Wusheng said sternly as he stared at Liu Ji.

Liu Ji hung her head as she angrily glared at Lu Yin. This annoying person had suddenly appeared out of nowhere, distracted her, and caused her to fail and be scolded by Master Wusheng.

“Again!” Master Wusheng roared, completely ignoring Lu Yin, who was now right beside him. Master Wusheng took out another starburst orb and gave it to Liu Ji while still glaring at her.

Liu Ji took a deep breath and removed the thin metal layer yet again. Star energy surged from her palm, neutralizing the violent star energy within the ball in just three seconds.

Master Wusheng sighed. “It’s still three seconds. It seems that you won’t be able to overcome this threshold anytime soon.”

Liu Ji hung her head in disappointment. Three seconds was a significant threshold that she wanted to overcome someday. She wasn’t hoping to clear the energy instantly, but even a minor improvement of one or two seconds would show that her ability had improved. This was very important to Lockbreakers, as their control of star energy was of the utmost importance to them.

“Can I try playing with that ball?” Lu Yin asked. He was very interested in the orb, and if his guesses were right, then this should probably be some kind of assessment that tested one’s control over their star energy. Moreover, he saw that there was a spacecraft that did not belong to Astral-10, and the symbol of the Lockbreaker Society was even emblazoned on the spacecraft.

Liu Ji snorted disdainfully. “Go away.”

Lu Yin blinked before saying, “You mentioned neutralizing it within three seconds just now. I can do that too.”

Both Master Wusheng and Liu Ji were stunned when they heard Lu Yin’s claim. The starburst orb looked simple, but the surging star energy contained within it was very complicated, and it would erupt violently if one tried to wipe it out forcefully. It could only be neutralized by someone whose control over star energy had reached a certain level. There were a very small number of people who could do this within a minute, let alone three seconds. Otherwise, this orb wouldn’t have become the Lockbreaker Society’s standard assessment method.

Master Wusheng frowned. The quality of Astral-10 has truly dropped. This student can’t even tell how difficult the starburst orb is to neutralize.

“Go away. Where did you come from?” Liu Ji was annoyed. She had just been scolded by her master and was still disgruntled that Lu Yin had interrupted her.

Lu Yin felt helpless as he insisted, “Just let me have a try. You won’t lose anything if I fail.”

Liu Ji was furious and glared at Lu Yin, but she was just about to tell him off again, Wusheng waved his hands. “Give it to him.”

“Master, this guy-” Liu Ji was reluctant, but Wusheng impatiently said, “Just give it to him,” before boarding the spacecraft to leave.

Liu Ji snorted and threw the starburst orb at Lu Yin before following behind Wusheng.

Lu Yin caught the starburst orb, and the star energy within the ball immediately started surging again. When he felt the energy in the ball, he estimated that, with his current level of control over star energy, he would need at least ten seconds to neutralize the surging energy. Only geniuses like Xia Luo would be able to finish it in three seconds. However, Lu Yin could also try using his Cosmic Art to control the starburst orb, as it increased his perception abilities towards all kinds of changes.

Lu Yin immediately activated his Cosmic Art, causing eight stars to start circling around him and revealing the surging star energy as clearly as a child's puzzle. Lu Yin smiled, "I'm done."

Wusheng, who was about to step onto the spacecraft, whirled around to look at the starburst orb in Lu Yin's hands. Four seconds! This child actually completed it in four seconds!

Liu Ji was stunned as well. Four seconds, that's impossible! Where did this genius come from? Even Xia Luo took five seconds to completely neutralize it.

In an instant, Master Wusheng appeared in front of Lu Yin, looking at him with an expression of shock. "Do it again."

Lu Yin beamed, as the Lockbreaker Society was the exact backing that he needed. There were too many enemies in the Nine Trial Zones as Astral-10 was too famous. There was just no way for him to survive there without some kind of support. A special organization like the Lockbreaker Society was exactly what he needed. As there were definitely people from the Lockbreaker Society within the Astral Combat Academy.

The energy in the starburst orb began raging once more while Master Wusheng and Liu Ji stood in front of Lu Yin, watching him. He once again used his Cosmic Art to observe the changes within the surging star energy in the starburst orb before neutralizing the energy. This time, he finished even faster than before: three seconds! He had managed to complete it in just three seconds.

Liu Ji's mouth fell open as her shock peaked. This, this guy completed it in three seconds! Where did this freak come from? She had been born into the Lockbreaker Society and her parents and grandfather were all Lockbreakers. Even so, it had taken her more than ten years of training before she was able to neutralize the starburst orb in three seconds. Just where had this guy come from?

Master Wusheng was also astonished. This was a genuine genius standing before him! He had now met two geniuses today, but this one was even more talented than the first. He had already known about Xia Luo, so he hadn't been too surprised, but this student in front of him was a true lucky encounter. Master Wusheng warmly asked Lu Yin, "Young fellow, what is your name? Are you a student of Astral-10?"

Lu Yin nodded and smiled. "I am Lu Yin from Astral-10. It's nice to meet you."

Master Wusheng was shocked. "Lu? Your surname is Lu?"

Lu Yin answered, "Yes, my surname is Lu, and I'm from Earth of the Great Yu Empire."

"The Great Yu Empire? Then you have a legal status. That's good. I'm Wusheng. You can call me Master Wusheng," Wusheng said in relief. There was a strict rule in the Lockbreaker Society that stated that the society wouldn't accept people with primeval surnames if they didn't have a legal status. Lu was one

such primeval surnames, and Xia was actually another one. However, he wasn't too worried about Xia Luo's status as he had Elder Tan's guarantee. Fortunately, Lu Yin also held a legal status. Otherwise, Wusheng wouldn't be able to accept him regardless of how talented he was.

"Greetings, Master Wusheng," Lu Yin said in a respectful and humble tone.

Master Wusheng nodded in satisfaction as he started to grow fond of Lu Yin. Finding a genius like him so unexpectedly could turn out to be one of his greatest achievements. If in the future, Lu Yin produced great accomplishments, then it would be proof that Wusheng had a great eye for spotting talent. He had travelled all over the universe, hoping to find geniuses like the student before them, but they were just too rare. He had never expected to find one today.

"Lu Yin, have you heard of the Lockbreaker Society?" Master Wusheng asked.

Liu Ji was still in a daze; this guy had easily completed a task that she had spent ten years training to do so. Xia Luo was already at the five second threshold, and he would definitely improve to three seconds after just a few more years of training. But Lu Yin had them all beat. He had accomplished it on his first day; this guy was really revolting.

"The Lockbreaker Society? Of course, Lockbreakers are a greatly respected group of people," Lu Yin gushed excitedly.

Master Wusheng was even happier now. Although he rarely smiled, he truly felt very happy at this moment. He looked at the sincere gaze of the young man standing in front of him and said in a contented tone, "Are you willing to join the Lockbreaker Society?"

Lu Yin blinked and pointed at himself in feigned disbelief. "Me? Can I, Master?"

"Of course. The Lockbreaker Society has a fixed assessment for talented cultivators. However, since you are already able to neutralize the starburst orb in three seconds, you are eligible to skip the assessment stage, so long as there's no problem with your status. By the way, your control over star energy has reached the infinite change stage, correct?" Master Wusheng said.

Lu Yin nodded as he responded, "Yes."

Master Wusheng nodded in satisfaction. He asked Lu Yin to wait for a moment while he verified Lu Yin's information. As long as there were no problems with what was recorded, Lu Yin would be able to immediately join the Lockbreaker Society.

While Master Wusheng was looking up Lu Yin's information, Liu Ji stared at Lu Yin as if he were a monster, causing Lu Yin to feel uncomfortable. "Astral-10 isn't bad at all. You guys have concealed yourselves well."

Lu Yin was confused. "Concealed ourselves? How so?"

Liu Ji sneered. She had come to the conclusion that Astral-10 was just pretending to be weak. Everyone had long since assumed that all of Astral-10's students were useless, but no one knew that there were multiple geniuses dwelling here, not to mention the two Lockbreakers. Lockbreaking was a rare talent even in the scope of the entire Astral Combat Academy. It was already considered quite good for an

academy to have two lockbreakers among their entire student body, but two had suddenly appeared in Astral-10 out of nowhere, and they were both extremely talented as well. This was bordering on absurd.

Normally, one would be eligible to take the Lockbreaker Society's assessment if they could neutralize a starburst orb within a minute. If they were able to do so under ten seconds, then they would automatically pass the assessment. Only geniuses were able to complete the starburst orb within five seconds on their first try, but two students from Astral-10 had accomplished the strictest criterion: Xia Luo and this guy. Liu Ji was still wondering if there were any other geniuses among Astral-10 students when she suddenly remembered Silver as well as that mysterious top student. Oh right, I forgot to ask what the name of the top student was.

"Hey, who's the top student in Astral-10?" Liu Ji suddenly asked.

Lu Yin pointed at himself. "Me."

Liu Ji ignored his answer. This person didn't intimidate here and even felt weaker than that silver haired guy. In her mind, it was impossible for Lu Yin to be the top student. "It's fine if you don't want to tell me, but don't lie."

Lu Yin was curious. Why is this girl so sure that I'm not the top student?

Chapter 149: Undying Manual

"Just remember this. No matter how hard you people from Astral-10 work, it's impossible for you to ever match up against the other combat academies from the Inniverse. At best, you might become as powerful as Astral-9. The Astral Combat Tournament isn't about showy battle techniques or concealing your abilities, but rather demonstrating your true power," Liu Ju said. She already considered herself as a part of Astral-6.

Her words only made Lu Yin extremely confused; she seemed a little crazy to him.

Soon enough, Master Wusheng smiled, walked over to Lu Yin, and extended an emblem to him with a serious expression. "I would like to officially ask you if you are willing to join the Lockbreaker Society and become a Junior Lockbreaker."

Lu Yin took a deep breath and, with a fervent look in his eyes, replied, "Yes, sir. I'm willing to dedicate the rest of my life to the Lockbreaker Society."

Ju was rendered speechless by his act. This guy was saying the exact same things as Xia Luo. Had they rehearsed it?!

Master Wusheng froze for a brief moment but then chuckled as he handed the emblem over to Lu Yin. He patted Lu Yin on the shoulder and exclaimed, "Great. From now on, you're officially a registered member of our Lockbreaker Society. However, you currently have zero merit points, which you can only obtain by successfully breaking locks. When others wish to ask Lockbreakers for help, they mostly choose based on how many merit points the Lockbreaker has earned, so please work hard."

"Yes, sir." Lu Yin was very excited with his membership. He mainly wanted the Lockbreaker Society's backing, so he didn't really care about these merit points.

Master Wusheng sighed before saying, "Xia Luo has Elder Tan to teach him, so there won't be any problems there. You just joined the society, however, so you really don't know anything, and it's not like you can suddenly start breaking locks. How about this; I'll give you a few books. Also, you must promise me that once you start officially breaking locks, you'll contact me first."

So Xia Luo also joined the society? It seems that this person came here just to recruit Xia Luo. and Elder Tan must be the Trialmaster! All of these mentors seem to be hiding something. Meanwhile, Lu Yin nodded earnestly and took the books. They were all from the society and were invaluable.

Liu Ju glared at Lu Yin. "Make sure that you take care of them and don't lose them. Those books are worth more than your life."

"Don't spout nonsense, Liu Ju. No matter how valuable these books are, they can only pass their knowledge down to others while people are the ones to create the knowledge that is held within the books. The two can't be compared," Master Wusheng said sternly.

After being scolded again, Liu Ju pursed her lips and chose to remain silent.

Master Wusheng spent a bit more time talking with Lu Yin before finally leaving with Liu Ju. Lu Yin watched the spacecraft soar through the sky while he sighed ruefully at how fickle fate was. What an amazing coincidence it was for him to run into such a great opportunity right before he left the academy. And this was the Lockbreaker Society, not just any run-of-the-mill organisation! With his new identity, he'd be free to do as he liked in any part of the universe. How liberating!

However, even if he used his newly acquired identity of a Lockbreaker, it would still be difficult to find a backer for the trial zones. No one would acknowledge him, not even if he showed them his emblem. Only power was relevant there. Lu Yin had a feeling that he needed to first successfully break a lock before he would be able to use his Lockbreaker status to find protection in the trial zones.

After boarding his own Aurora spacecraft, Lu Yin prepared to fly over to the Irven Merchants' meeting point, which was a one day journey from Astral-10. Given the speed of his universal spacecraft, the meeting location was pretty far, but it was still within the Frostwave Weave's territory.

Before Lu Yin started the spacecraft up, he checked to see if it needed a power source, but he couldn't find anything. With how advanced modern technology was, this spacecraft worked in a way that he could not understand. Whatever it was, it did not need any additional power source.

This was good news for Lu Yin, as otherwise, this would just be another thing that required large amounts of money. While the Aurora spacecraft was already a money-devouring monster, it was good to save wherever he could.

He selected his route, set the spacecraft to autopilot, and then took out the books that Master Wusheng had given him. He then began to carefully peruse them.

Back within Astral-10, Xia Luo was leisurely walking around while he played with the starburst orb in his hand. Within the blink of an eye, he removed the thick metal layer covering it. Star energy trembled within it, and a moment later, all of the rampaging star energy was calmed down.

If Master Wusheng had seen this, then he would have definitely been shocked speechless. People with outstanding ability like Liu Ju were already able to neutralize the energy within three seconds, and there

were few people among the young generation of the Lockbreaker Society who could do this. Those who could neutralize the energy in less than three seconds were much rarer, and it was nearly impossible to find someone who could do so instantly. Liu Ju had done everything she could in order to shorten her time by even one second, but for Xia Luo, it seemed to be as easy as breathing!

“The test for the Junior Lockbreakers, huh? How childish,” Xia Luo mused as he nonchalantly crushed the orb in his hands. Then, he looked up, his eyes shining with a profound light that nobody could understand.

A day later, Lu Yin’s spacecraft started beeping. He opened his eyes and found that there were quite a few spacecraft surrounding him. He had landed at the space station of a blue planet, with the surrounding spacecraft landing one after another.

Lu Yin had fallen asleep due to sheer exhaustion after studying the books for over ten hours. And surprisingly, by the time he woke up, he had already arrived at his destination.

His time spent studying was not in vain, as his understanding of what a Lockbreaker actually was had expanded greatly. These books had also helped him understand why the universe prized Lockbreakers so much. If the universe was said to contain countless treasures, then Lockbreakers were the guards who held the keys to those treasures. In one of the books, it had listed out a few examples of why Lockbreakers were so important.

The example that had been deeply imprinted into Lu Yin’s memory was the Daynight clan’s ancient inheritance stone. It turned out that the stone had been unlocked by a powerful Lockbreaker from that clan, and that unlocked inheritance stone was the start of the Daynight clan’s history of possessing unparalleled battle techniques.

Another memorable example was the Ross Empire, which was one of the three great powers that had attacked during Astral-10’s exam. The ancient technology that they had inherited had been unlocked by a Lockbreaker.

There was also Shamrock Enterprises, which had inherited treasures that Lockbreakers had unlocked.

There were so, so many examples that exemplified the importance of Lockbreakers. However, while Lockbreakers were able to unlock ancient items that had been sealed away, the society’s actual battle power wasn’t very impressive, mostly because their numbers were so few. Currently, there were only about 630,000 registered Lockbreakers in the society. There were countless people within the universe, but there were merely 630,000 Lockbreakers.

Astral-10’s exam alone had attracted about a million students. 630,000 Lockbreakers was a tiny number when compared to the population of the Frostwave Weave—no, even on Earth, this would be true. Their member count was only comparable to the population of a tiny province. This number was nothing in the scope of the larger universe.

Lu Yin released a pent up breath. He’d only just now realized what kind of organization he had joined. No wonder Master Wusheng had been sceptical of his ability to clear the starburst orb assessment. Finding somebody who could do so was not one in a million, but more like one in ten million.

Of course, Lu Yin didn't trust the reported membercount. In this universe, what organization didn't have a few secrets? There had to be more than 630,000 Lockbreakers as there was no way their member count would be inflated. The number of Lockbreakers was determined by the number of people who could comprehend star energy. Lu Yin could be considered a genius in this, but that was only because of his Cosmic Art.

Lu Yin stored the books away and looked outside. His spacecraft was still lining up to land, and while slow, it would take less than half an hour. Before long, Lu Yin had parked the spacecraft and found the Irven Merchants where they'd agreed to meet.

The Irven Merchants traded not only commercial products, but also troops. This journey was because of the war that had broken out in the Frostwave Weave.

Right after Lu Yin left Astral-10, he had received a notification that war was brewing within the Great Yu Empire; the second prince had been revealed as a traitor and Undying Yushan's old medical problems had resurfaced. Zhang Dingtian and some others had disappeared as well. While Lu Yin now knew about all this, he was still unable to intervene.

His title, King Zishan, was merely a title. He was still nothing more than a Melder and didn't even have the right to interfere. The only thing he could do was pray for Zhang Dingtian and the others. Everyone had their own fate; they might die or obtain a huge opportunity, but nobody knew the future for certain. If it was possible, then they would meet again somewhere in the universe!

While Lu Yin was reliving the night he had spent drinking with the second prince on the capital star, an obese man who seemed like a businessman walked over. After Lu Yin stated who he was, the man grew completely disinterested in Lu Yin due to his identity as a student of Astral-10. The man was very calm, namely because Astral-10's reputation was already ruined.

Two hours later, Lu Yin withdrew 150,000 star energy crystals from the bank cards and returned to his spacecraft before following the Irven Merchants into space.

Lu Yin being a student of Astral-10 had not surprised the obese merchant, but Lu Yin's Aurora spacecraft did. The man became a lot more enthusiastic when talking to Lu Yin, who then burst into laughter. Being a student at Astral-10 can't even compare to owning a spacecraft. How hilarious. Lu Yin wondered if this fat man might die from shock if he revealed that he was a Lockbreaker as well.

The Irven Merchants had a total of twelve universal spacecrafts that traveled in a straight line north of the Frostwave Weave. The cargo spacecraft was massive, dwarfing all the others. Only Lu Yin remained in a personal spacecraft, though that drew quite a bit of attention as not many people had an Aurora spacecraft in the Outerverse.

After successfully setting course, traveling through space was pretty dull unless they happened to encounter space pirates. Lu Yin was aware of this, so he continued reading his books.

Before much time passed, his gadget made a sound. Lu Yin was shocked since it was from an unfamiliar ID and in the form of a video call. He did not hesitate at all to tap the screen, causing a familiar face appeared in front of him.

“Long time no see, Seven.” An aged man had appeared on the screen. A strand of white hair hung loosely from his forehead, and he appeared to be around fifty years old. His eyes seemed to penetrate through everyone he looked at.

Upon seeing him, Lu Yin grew ecstatic. “I didn’t expect for you to contact me, Uncle Reuben!”

“Are you doing okay out there?” The man called Reuben looked solemn and did not smile at all. However, he gazed at Lu Yin with a gentle look in his eyes.

Lu Yin nodded. “I’m doing great. How are things at home? Is everyone alright?”

Reuben replied, “You don’t have to worry about us. I’m contacting you to tell you about something important. You probably already know about the war in the Great Yu Empire. You should rush back to the imperial palace and do whatever you can to find the Zishan Family’s treasure before Undying Yushan passes away.”

Lu Yin’s eyes shone brightly. As expected, there was a secret within the Great Yu Empire; otherwise, his family wouldn’t have expended so much effort to set him up as the descendant of King Zishan. “What is this treasure?”

Reuben went quiet before seriously answering, “The Undying Manual.”

“The Undying Manual?” Lu Yin was confused, as he had never heard of it before.

Reuben replied, “It’s an ancient technique that’s been rumored to exist in the Inniverse Fallen Star Waters. It contains the secret to immortality.”

Lu Yin was startled. “How is that even possible? Nobody can become immortal. That goes against all the laws of the universe!”

“I know that. But even if one can’t become immortal, it’s possible for cultivators to extend their lives. Centuries ago, Undying Yushan and Undying Zishan ventured into the Inniverse and joined the Fallen Star Waters. After that, they rose in power and Undying Yushan even reached the top twenty rankings in the Star Battle List. Many guessed that Undying Zishan and Yushan obtained the Undying Manual together. They even changed their names! He wasn’t called Undying Yushan back then,” Reuben explained.

Chapter 150: Space Battle

“If people suspect that Undying Yushan and Undying Zishan found the manual, then why hasn’t anyone attacked them yet? Eliminating Undying Yushan should be as easy as turning over a hand for any major Inniverse organization.” Lu Yin was confused by this news.

“That’s because Undying Yushan isn’t the only one suspected of having the manual. Anyone who’s ever been to the Fallen Sea Waters is also under suspicion, and there’s simply too many of them. Also, it’s not as if no one’s ever tried to attack Undying Yushan before. How else do you think he received his injuries? It’s precisely because he’s so seriously injured that many organizations’ suspicions about him were lifted. Even we don’t really know if he has the Undying Manual; we just want to verify the information. There are still many people in the Inniverse with similar suspicions,” Reuben answered.

Lu Yin nodded as this made sense. He had heard of the Starfall Sea before. It was an ancient place and a great number of people had visited it in the past. No matter how powerful the organizations in the Inniverse were, it was still impossible for them to check every single person that had ever been there. There were also many people much more powerful than Undying Yushan who were also suspected of possessing the Undying Manual. So since Undying Yushan was just one of many suspects, he was mainly watched closely by many people.

“That’s everything that you should know. Go to the Great Yu Empire’s Zenyu Star and attempt to find the Zishan Clan’s treasure before Undying Yushan passes away. There are some powerhouses from the Inniverse who seem to be preparing to make a move, so don’t take any needless risks. This isn’t the only reason why we set you up with the identity of King Zishan. With this position, you’ll be able to keep climbing the social ladder, so don’t waste it.” After speaking his final thoughts, Reuben cut the connection without waiting for a response.

Lu Yin still had many questions in his mind and quickly called back, but he was informed that the ID no longer existed, which meant that there was nothing more he could do. The people back home were abundantly cautious, so much so that he didn’t even have any way to contact them from his end.

It took at least ten days to travel from where Lu Yin had met the Irven Merchants to the northern part of the Frostwave Weave’s first region since it included traveling past the battlefield. With this much free time on his hands, Lu Yin continued flipping through the books that Master Wusheng had given him.

Quite a few days passed uneventfully. Then, one day, all of the merchant spacecrafts stopped as the space ahead of them had been sealed off. Past the seal, Lu Yin could see an extensive battle taking place.

The void of space was filled with light as planets exploded with enough energy that spatial distortions rippled out all around them as black holes consumed everything that neared them. This was Lu Yin’s first time seeing a large-scale space battle. The technological weapons used were as astounding as a powerhouse cultivator; a single beam was enough to destroy an entire planet. This was beyond the abilities of even most Explorer realm experts.

The universe was vast and the battle here was merely one of many, but it was still mind-numbingly shocking to Lu Yin. Weapons fired and bombs exploded as powerhouses fought in space, a perfect combination of power and technology. This was modern warfare.

Lu Yin’s spacecraft jostled. A number of planets had just been destroyed in front of him, and the destruction had caused the space to become unstable.

Not much time passed before Lu Yin noticed a large, burly man floating above a reddish planet with a knife and a miserable expression. The man looked around bitterly at the dozens of war spacecrafts that were surrounding the planet and merely sighed.

The weapons on those spacecrafts were immensely powerful and strong enough to take out Explorers. However, they needed a long windup time before they could fire. Thus, most Explorers could attack before these weapons were ready and easily destroy the spacecraft. Because of this, there were always protectors placed around these slow-firing spacecraft.

The burly man was completely lost as to what he should do; he wanted to destroy the spacecraft before him, but the two explorers would definitely stop him. It seemed as if there was nothing he could do besides wait for the spacecrafts' weapons to obliterate him and his home. It was a great tragedy.

Any space battle that included Explorers among its combatants were sure to be large campaigns, and this battle was an enlightening experience for Lu Yin. However, he did not grow excited to see it. Instead, he only felt sorrow as this battle reminded him of his experiences in the Innerverse. The universe followed the law of the jungle, and he was hyper aware of this pervasive law.

Quite a few spacecraft fired their weapons, and the Explorer who was protecting his home yelled out to the heavens in despair before ultimately disappearing along with the planet. Everyone who saw this scene went quiet. To many people, Explorers might seem invincible since they had the ability to travel freely throughout the universe. However, despite this man's strength, he still had no option but to die in this situation. Cultivation had no final destination.

Not too long after, the spatial seal in front of the merchant fleet was released and they continued heading north.

When Lu Yin passed by the siege spacecraft, he inadvertently locked eyes with one of the Explorers who was protecting a spacecraft. The Explorer had a cold and merciless look in his eyes and emanated a strong, powerful aura. He was clearly a veteran of the battlefield and not some average powerhouse. Where did he come from? Was he with the second prince? Or the Great Yu Empire?

The Irven Merchants were very lucky that the Great Yu Empire's war spanned a very large area. The wide-spread battles had caused most of the space pirates to retreat back into hiding, so after just a few days, the merchant fleet reached the first region without any trouble.

After bidding the obese boss farewell, Lu Yin collected some payment for his escort. It wasn't much, but it was still better than nothing. After programming his next destination into his spacecraft, he set out towards Zenyu Star.

Compared to his last visit to Zenyu Star, the current security was extremely strict. There were three large armies constantly patrolling the region, and the soldiers checked every spacecraft that approached the planet.

Lu Yin saw that numerous spacecraft that didn't belong to the Outerverse were entering the planet—among them must be quite a few looking for the Undying Manual. As expected, with Undying Yushan on the verge of death, the powerhouses of the Innerverse no longer bothered hiding themselves and had all appeared to collect any benefits that they could. They were all planning to scour the Great Yu Empire for treasures as soon as Undying Yushan died. Fortunately, no one here was actually that strong, which indicated that the Innerverse didn't hold very high expectations for Undying Yushan's treasures. It made sense. After all, the Undying Manual was rumored to bestow immortality to its practitioner, so it should be an incredible art. Despite that supposed power, Undying Yushan was now in such a pathetic state. Given what the situation was like, Lu Yin was of the opinion that Undying Yushan probably hadn't obtained the Undying Manual. Rather, the many powerhouses of the Innerverse simply did not want to give up on their centuries of hard work and saw this as their very last attempt to recoup their losses.

Looking at the various-colored spacecraft neatly arranged in a long, single-file line, Lu Yin took advantage of his position as King Zishan to find the name of the person in charge of the security checkpoint. After seeing who it was, he chuckled. It was someone he knew—Long Chu. He was the person who had initially schemed against Lu Yin when he first entered the capital star. However, Lu Yin had managed to take care of it, and now, Long Chu was affiliated with Sicar, though Sicar should have left with the second prince, Duke Yushan. Lu Yin was quite surprised to see that Long Chu was still hanging around.

“Your lowly servant Long Chu greets your highness, King Zishan.” The guards around him bowed as well. “Greetings to your highness, King Zishan.”

Lu Yin casually grunted and looked at Long Chu with a twinkle in his eye. “You’re still in the third round of the capital?”

Long Chu had a serious expression on his face. “Yes. Please enter Zenyu Star using this alternative route.”

Lu Yin gave him another glance before following the soldiers to Zenyu Star.

Long Chu watched as Lu Yin left on his spacecraft with a glint in his eyes.

The entire mood of the capital star was much different from before; there was a feeling of desolation and it was rare to see a smile anywhere. Regardless of the era, whenever an imperial family collapsed, there would be great upheaval within the empire. Now that the second prince had betrayed the empire, many predicted that the Great Yu Empire was about to enter a time of calamity. It was clear that war was imminent.

Lu Yin used his position as King Zishan to enter the palace. After multiple security checks, he arrived before Undying Yushan, only to see the Emperor half-immersed in a liquid bath. Lu Yin took a deep breath. “Greetings to Your Majesty.”

There were numerous doctors rushing around Undying Yushan as well as multiple powerhouses guarding him in secret, including the captains of the Third and Fifth Imperial Squadrons. Jue Lang and Huo Qingshan stood nearby and attentively watched every single person that entered.

Undying Yushan slowly opened his eyes, and after seeing Lu Yin, he said in a frail voice, “Come closer, Lu Yin.”

Lu Yin took several steps forward and bowed. “Your Majesty.”

Undying Yushan took a few deep breaths and moved his head slightly. Perhaps it was because he was overly exhausted, but he soon shifted back to his original position and smiled wryly. “Sorry for looking so terrible, Lu Yin. I’m dying.”

Lu Yin frowned and said in a low voice, “You aren’t! You’re a powerful hunter and will live for at least a thousand years!”

Undying Yushan smiled, shook his head, and sighed again. “The Innverse is merciless. So what if I was in the top twenty on the Star Battle List? Those people are all monsters.”

“Are you doing well in Astral-10, Lu Yin?”

Lu Yin earnestly answered, “I’m the leader of Astral-10.”

Everyone in the room was startled. Being a leader was not a position that just anyone could obtain. Even though Astral-10 had been forced out of the Innerverse, it was still an academy that would attract many geniuses. Some Innerverse geniuses should have joined the academy as well, so his becoming the leader even with all of these geniuses around might be a first in the Outerverse!

Undying Yushan burst into laughter, but then quickly coughed vigorously; scaring all the doctors as they rushed over to help him.

Lu Yin stood there helplessly as there was nothing he could do. He had been planning to say that he had also become a Lockbreaker to raise his status and hopefully make it easier to find the Zishan clan treasure, but with how weak Undying Yushan was, there was no way he could say something that stimulating. What if the man died from the shock?

A while later, Undying Yushan recovered and said bitterly, “Congratulations, Lu Yin. Every branch of the Astral Combat Academy has its hidden geniuses and Astral-10 is no different. Y-You’ve got to treasure this position. The director especially is-is... cough, he was once an peak powerhouse.”

Lu Yin nodded. “I understand, Your Majesty.”

“A-Also,” As he spoke, Undying Yushan’s look turned even more solemn. “Hurry back to the academy and don’t interfere in the matters of the empire. Remember, don’t interfere and leave as soon as you can.” After that came another round of violent coughing.

Next to Lu Yin, Huo Qingshan spoke up. “You’d best leave, King Zishan. His Majesty needs treatment.”

Lu Yin bowed to Undying Yushan and slowly retreated.

Lu Yin looked back as he began to walk around the palace. The imminent death of the emperor was even more of a tragedy than he had expected. The first prince, Dorren Yushan, was waging war against his brother, Duke Yushan, while Wendy Yushan was far away in the Innerverse. The Emperor of the Great Yu Emperor didn’t even have any of his children or grandchildren around to bid him farewell. Dorren Yushan was already a few centuries old and had quite a few children and grandchildren of his own; however, not a single one was allowed to come close to Undying Yushan. Right now, for the emperor, the people he wanted to see the most were his children.

Everyone was focused on Undying Yushan’s condition and nobody cared that Lu Yin was wandering through the palace. His actions were all excusable as long as he did not disturb Undying Yushan.

The palace was massive and Lu Yin did not manage to find anything even after searching for a long time. He had no idea where to even begin looking for the Zishan clan’s treasure. Did Duke Yushan know? Was that why he had suggested to Lu Yin that he find it? Lu Yin didn’t know, but it wouldn’t matter even if he did—he had had no way to contact the Duke. Lu Yin also wasn’t naive enough to think that no one was watching him. He knew that, from the first moment he stepped foot inside the palace, his gadget had been put under surveillance.

It gradually grew dark and Lu Yin could no longer wander around in the palace as he pleased, so he headed outside.

There were countless officials waiting to be summoned by Undying Yushan in front of the great entrance. Lu Yin saw two from whom he had sought bribes from in the past. Lu Yin even considered them acquaintances to some extent.

All of the officials saw Lu Yin leaving the palace and he noted that everyone's expression changed when they saw him. His two "acquaintances" had a particularly glum look on their faces.